'THE REFUGEE' REPRODUCED, NEGOTIATED, AND REPRESENTED: HIERARCHIES OF MALIAN REFUGEENESS IN BURKINA FASO

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ABSTRACT

This dissertation starts from an empirical observation and an intellectual assumption. The former dates from 2013: during a research trip in Burkina Faso I heard and observed humanitarian workers distinguish (in both discourse and practice) between who they thought were 'real refugees' and those who were not, regardless of their legal status. The intellectual assumption is that a category and a label are not only imposed on people designated as such, but are negotiated by the actors themselves and within their interactions with other actors and their social and political economies.

Building on these elements, the questions at the centre of this work are: how are hierarchies of refugeeness (re-)produced? And how, when, and why can this (re-) production create or reinforce inequalities among the refugees? I answer these questions by relying on three empirical chapters which focus on different aspects of the construction of refugeeness and the experiences people have and make of 'the refugee' category in the context of Malian forced migration in urban Burkina Faso. More specifically, I look at the encounter of the refugee regime and the refugees' lives through the study of the reproduction, negotiation, and representation of 'the refugee' status and category.

What I found and show is how hierarchies of refugeeness can create or reinforce inequalities among the refugees, and how refugeeness, and the possibilities to negotiate with it are unequally produced and distributed, locally but also globally. By unpacking refugeeness through the notion of commodification and relying on ethnographic methods and economic anthropology to study humanitarian interventions, I analyse how the encounter between the refugee regime and the refugees' complex, situated, and varied lives can produce inequalities and is experienced unequally by the refugees themselves.

À Hawa et Noura

À Agnès, Ben et Ferreole

Alla nona Rina e alla nona Marica

A Chiara

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Un matin, on se réveille. Il est temps de se retirer du monde pour mieux s'en étonner. Un matin, on prend le temps de se regarder vivre.

(Maxence Fermine)

ACRONYMS

CONAREF	*Commission Nationale pour les Réfugiés, Ministère des Affaires Étrangères et de la Coopération Régionale du Burkina Faso* National Commission for Refugees, Department of Foreign Affairs and Regional Cooperation, Burkina Faso
CREDO	Christian Relief and Development Organisation
CSI	*Centre de support en santé international* Support Centre for International Health
CSPS	*Centre de santé et promotion sociale* Primary health facility
IGA	Income generating activity
ECOWAS	Economic Community of West African States
IEDA (Relief)	International Emergency and Development Aid
MNLA	*Mouvement national de libération de l'Azawad* National Movement for the Liberation of Azawad
OAU	Organisation of African Unity
TDH	*Terre des Hommes*, NGO
WFP / *PAM*	World Food Programme / *Programme alimentaire mondiale*
UNHCR / *HCR* / UNHCR BF	United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees / *Haut commissaire pour les réfugiés* / United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees Burkina Faso

[...]

Nobody is ever just a refugee. Nobody is ever just a single thing.

[...]

I would like to suggest today that this is a time for a new narrative. A narrative in which we truly see those about whom we speak. Let us tell a different story. Let us tell the story differently. Let us remember that the movement of human beings on earth is not new. Human history is a story of movement and mingling. Let us remember that we are not just bones and flesh, we are emotional beings. We all share a desire to be valued, a desire to matter. Let us remember that dignity is as important as food.

When we speak of people who are in need, let us speak not only of their need, but also of what they love. What they resent, what wounds their pride, what they aspire to. What makes them laugh?

(Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie)

THE BEGINNING

It all started in July 2013, when I was doing research for my master's thesis on the topic of law, rules, and regulations in a refugee camp just outside Ouagadougou, the capital of Burkina Faso. A statement made by a humanitarian worker caught my attention: “in this camp they are not *real* refugees, because they do not come running to you telling the horrible hardships they have been through, and they just ask for more and more.” This sentiment came up in an informal meeting between humanitarian workers in the camp, when some workers were complaining about how difficult the refugees were, implying that this was also due to them being of Tuareg origin. I remember the statement affected me because in my experience they were not 'difficult', and there were no 'real' as opposed to 'not real' refugees. First and foremost, they were people, like Ousmane, Aboubakar, Nina, Sherif, Assi, each one with

his/her own personality, strengths and weaknesses, as we all have. They also happened to have been recognised as refugees and to be living in a particular situation, the camp; and indeed, most of them were Tuareg, but this was not what I saw, nor what they saw, as defining them.

I heard the expression 'real refugee' scattered throughout my time in the field in 2013 and 2014 and its frequent usage made me especially interested in knowing how the idea and image of a 'real refugee' is created, reified and contested. Additionally, I gradually realised that the ways in which humanitarian workers conceptualised the 'real/worthy/deserving/ideal refugee' influenced their discourses and practices towards the target population, and their decisions regarding the allocation of limited resources. This was not part of my original study and at that stage it was too late to change my subject. I therefore decided I wanted to pursue a PhD to follow-up on these observations.

During my first year of DPhil in Oxford I built on those observations and reworked the research proposal I had submitted. My goal before taking off for field research, in June 2015, was to examine the disconnect between ideas of the 'real' and the 'not real' refugee generated by the humanitarian community in field operations. In particular, I wanted to examine how that tension would relate to (and constrain) refugees' notion of agency in the context of Malian forced migration, focusing on the Tuareg living in a refugee camp in Burkina Faso. My core concern was the 'feeling' that injustices were taking place within a refugee camp and that inequalities were being produced or reinforced within that space on the basis of representations and stereotypes field workers had towards refugees – taking into account that stereotypes and representations do not originate in a void.

Unsurprisingly, as is the nature of research and fieldwork, plans change and evolve. Indeed, even before leaving to do research it became clear I could not carry out my research in a refugee camp, as the camp of Sag-Nioniongo, near Ouagadougou, closed down before I was due to leave for Burkina Faso in the summer of 2015. The two remaining camps were in the north of the country and unless I hired my own armed escort, UNHCR and my embassy forbade me to go there. As carrying out ethnographic research with an armed escort did not make sense to me, I decided to focus on self-settled urban refugees and to go to Bobo-Dioulasso by adapting my research to a new context.

While writing my dissertation, I realised that my aim had not changed and was still the one born out of observations I made in those first periods of research, in 2013 and 2014; observations which upset me, but I could not quite point the finger at exactly why. In the end, this is a story about inequalities produced or reproduced by the refugee regime, which is what I had set out to do in the first place.

Of course, the increasing concern I felt at the potential production of inequalities and injustices in those spaces was also guided by a conviction that humanitarianism in general and the refugee regime in particular should help people in difficult situations. Yet this conviction is a mainstream and common-sense one, as diving into the literature of the anthropology of humanitarianism would have told me long ago. As main proponents of this approach have said (such as Fassin and Ticktin), the underlying idea that humanitarianism produces hierarchies of people became key in my dissertation. Without realising it or seeing it until the end, my thesis illustrates this point, and denounces it. The reason I am passionate about what I discuss in this dissertation is because against the odds, I am an optimistic dreamer who thinks that 'another world is possible'.

1.

INTRODUCTION

This thesis starts from the assumption that a category and a label are not only imposed on people designated as such, but are negotiated by the actors themselves and via their interactions with other actors and their social and political economies. Categories and labels therefore take shape and meaning in that context,[1] they are not unambiguous signifiers of a single objective reality (Fresia 2009, 21). The refugee status is not just assigned to an individual and remains unchanged; refugees make it their own in their milieu and within structures that surround them and that they participate in. Yet, some are better situated than others to carry out these 'negotiations'. This can be partly understood by the social and political contexts in which the refugees' lives sit, but also as the outcome of the encounter between the contemporary refugee regime with those lives, which can end up creating new or reinforcing old inequalities. My aim is to show how the refugee regime can produce hierarchies among a refugee population. Indeed, the ways in which 'the refugee' and therefore refugeeness are constructed by humanitarian practitioners and other actors create hierarchies between 'the people of concern', thus (re)producing inequalities of various kinds. This argument is based on 12 months of ethnographic fieldwork carried out primarily in Bobo-Dioulasso (the second city of Burkina Faso) with Malian refugees living in an urban setting.

As I said in the prologue, the motivation for this research came from a sentiment of unfairness and injustice I developed when witnessing how certain discourses held by people 'in power' translated into discriminatory practices. To understand what the

1. Being aware that, as Polzer (2008, 479) says, “a focus on negotiations contradicts Zetter's

encounter between the refugee regime and the refugees' lives can produce in terms of difference and hierarchies, I deemed an economic anthropology lens infused with a postcolonial and feminist perspective, the more fruitful approach. This analytical framework is inductive because I started thinking about the majority of what I was observing in the field from an economic anthropology perspective. When I refer to economic anthropology, it is not to argue that the refugee regime is profiting and extracting or generating value from the refugees, as other scholars have argued.[2] Similarly, it is not simply to use the work of Mauss (2016 [1925]). If humanitarianism generally, or the refugee regime in particular, have been approached through an economic anthropology framework before, it has been done by relying on the concept of 'the gift', or by highlighting the multi-billion industry that aid represents; my aim in this thesis is different. I show how economic anthropology is a fruitful analytical framework to study humanitarianism and in particular the refugee regime at its various levels – from how organisations like UNHCR run at the global level, to the emic and micro level of understanding how refugees negotiate with their status in everyday experiences. As I noted above, it came about inductively and the concept of commodification processes (that I discuss below) helped me make sense of how the category and figure 'refugee' can be reproduced. Additionally, this approach allowed me to make sense of how hierarchies and inequalities can be produced within the refugee regime and to highlight how the latter also intersects with regimes of structural inequalities.

2. Andersson (2018) proposes an interesting piece of work on how the notion of bioeconomy allows us to study how value is both extracted and generated in relation to people on the move and their vitality.

REFUGEENESS

When I first thought about 'commodification' in my fieldwork, it was in relation to the refugee status. As it will be developed in Chapter 5, following specific (in)actions of UNHCR in Burkina Faso, the refugee status became perceived by most of the refugees as something that was worth £45 – rather than a legal status or everything else it may have meant to them or to the humanitarian community. I thus started thinking about the political economy of the status and the category and later on, once back in Oxford, with all the material in front of me, I realised that I could use 'commodification' as an analytical/heuristic tool to approach and unpack 'refugeeness', rather than to understand the ways in which refugees could negotiate with the legal status itself.

Refugeeness is not very widely used as a concept, and even when it is used, it is rarely defined. Malkki understands refugeeness as the social, political, and legal constructions produced by the international refugee regime – made up of "UN organizations, together with national and international aid and relief agencies, NGOs, charity groups, development agencies, etc." (1995b, 506). Nyers starts from Malkki's conceptualisation of the term, but gives a slightly more developed and explicit definition of it. For him, refugeeness is linked with representational practices and their politics and is "concerned with the various qualities and characteristics that are regularly associated with and assigned to refugee identity" (Nyers 2006, xv). In both conceptualisations, there is a clear link between: 1) those representations and constructions; 2) their practices and politics; and 3) the interventions and programmes of humanitarian and aid agencies on the ground. This is due to the latter being tailored on the former (this may not be visible from these short definitions, but it is in their larger words). Nyers appreciates the ambiguity that such a definition leaves, as

this vagueness allows to take into account changes and motions of such constructions and of the 'refugee' label itself. Additionally, the "concept's indistinct, ambiguous character has the advantage of making visible otherwise unnoticed political relationships" (Nyers 2006, vx). Relationships that all feed into these representational practices, but which are rarely acknowledged and often taken as 'natural'.

I want to introduce an additional 'layer' to this. As labels and categories are not just fixed on people, but also lived, changed, and negotiated by those people, the same goes for representations and constructions. People concerned by it – refugees – can embrace, contest, or shift these constructions. They can perform such constructions according to what is expected from them, or not. For instance, Szczepanikova (2010, 474), talks about "'refugeeness' as a social construction of what is considered to be typical for people labelled as refugees. This construction changes over time and varies in relation to different beholders and performers. Refugeeness […] is constantly being re-created and performed in social interactions." In this case refugeeness is what is believed to be 'the refugee experience' by/for a variety of actors – humanitarians, refugees, donors or civil societies.

Refugeeness as social, political, and legal constructions – and their qualities and characteristics – regularly associated with 'the refugee' (label, category, and/or identity) is produced in the first place by the refugee regime. Yet refugees, as well as other actors in their contexts (e.g. host communities), then re-create and reproduce refugeeness in particular social situations and interactions. These can be in line with the constructions of the humanitarian regime, but can also take other forms. In the refugee regime and in particular within UNHCR's system and operations, refugeeness can be analysed and described as going through commodification processes. This statement has two goals (which I will develop further in the next section): the first is

to argue that we can use the concept of commodification as an analytical tool to deconstruct the ways in which 'the refugee' is (re-)produced and constructed. The second goal is to say that refugeeness appears as having taken on a natural and objective value and/or quality: the social and political relations behind its constructions are concealed – the fetishism[3] of refugeeness obscures these aspects. Of course, these processes are never entirely totalitarian and homogenising, as studying those constructions revealed, and 'commodification' is not the only rationality characterising the contemporary refugee regime. Yet this double approach to commodification seems appropriate in the empirical context in which I did my research, as it helped me to make sense of phenomenon I was observing in Burkina Faso, such as the capitalization on the refugee status (explored in Chapter 5), and larger (entrepreneurial) tendencies of UNHCR – reflected in, for example, the construction of 'the neoliberal refugee'.

Importantly, arguing that refugeeness can go through commodification processes allows me to unpack how hierarchies of refugeeness are produced today in Burkina Faso; hierarchies is used in this work to indicate how some refugees are deemed more 'real' and deserving (i.e. how some constructions and embodiments of 'the refugee' are more valued) than other ones and thus prioritised when it comes to assistance and aid. Of course, prioritising in distributing aid to individual most in needs has to be done where resources are scarce. The issue though is that the way prioritisation is done in Burkina Faso and the ways in which operations are carried out, do not often (or rarely) succeed in doing that. Looking into these hierarchies and the way in which the ideal refugee in today's regime is constructed, tells us a great deal about the sociological and historical realities in which this figure lives.

3. I develop this notion in the next section of this introduction and in Chapter 4.

The main questions I aim to answer in this dissertation are the following:

- How are hierarchies of refugeeness (re-)produced?
- How, when, and why can this (re-)production create or reinforce inequalities among the refugees?

The motivation behind these questions lies in my aim to reveal how the status of refugees is represented, reproduced, negotiated and contested in locations where humanitarian assistance (and UNHCR particularly) operates. To answer these questions, I rely on three empirical chapters which all contribute towards bringing to light different aspects, scales, and actors that participate in the creation of hierarchies of refugeeness in the context of Malian forced migration in Burkina Faso. These different perspectives will show why such hierarchies of refugeeness can eventually create or reinforce inequalities and unfairness among the refugees. I will show how the category 'refugee', and the possibilities to negotiate with it, are unequally produced and distributed, locally as well as globally. Overall, my dissertation is an ethnography of the encounter between the refugee regime and the refugees' complex and varied lives and the localised contexts in which they find themselves.[4]

The main part of this chapter focuses on developing the central theoretical bodies I build on to analyse the experiences of urban refugees living in Burkina Faso in their interactions with the refugee regime and the reasons I decided to include an 'economic lens'. I start by introducing what I take as the main contributions of those bodies of literature before moving on to discuss my proposal for what I would add to them to better understand how humanitarian interventions play out in practice. Finally, I outline the chapters of this thesis.

4. The 'encounter' I talk about is inevitable; one cannot study humanitarian institutions and the refugee regime without considering 'the refugees' – one would not exist without the other, they are in an interdependent relationship, as Fresia stresses in her work (2009, 23).

ACADEMIC LANDSCAPE

ANTHROPOLOGY OF HUMANITARIANISM

> "… as one gets deeper into humanitarianism a series of dimensions of what may be called a complex ontology of inequality unfolds that differentiates in a hierarchical manner the values of human lives" (Fassin 2007, 519).

The term 'humanitarianism' is used in different ways and with different meanings, linked with different actions and politics, both by people 'doing it' and by people studying it – and also by people not necessarily interested or concerned by it. Indeed, anthropologists use it with different conceptualisations and goals, though that is also because we tend to remain "attuned to differences in how people claim and define the value of humanity" (Bornstein and Redfield 2011, 4) and because we analyse the different uses, politics, and tensions between the existing conceptualisations. My thesis does not tackle those different meanings, nor the history, morality, or ideology of what has been defined as humanitarianism.[5] Nevertheless, it is a piece of work that I situate within this body of literature for two main reasons. On the one side because refugee assistance and protection, despite the slippage of tasks traditionally thought of as part of the development silo in to the remit of humanitarian organisations, are still talked about by its actors and media as humanitarianism and importantly are still perceived as such by the people 'doing it'. Humanitarian operations are changing and it is also for this that I combine anthropology of humanitarianism with economic anthropology and anthropology of globalisation, to make sense of those changes. On the other side, and importantly, I focus on studies of humanitarianism as there are

5. For that see for example Hours 1998; Boltanski 2007; Saillant 2007; Bornstein and Redfield 2011; Feldman and Ticktin 2010; Ticktin 2011; Fassin 2012; Scott-Smith 2016.

assumptions and conceptualisations in that body of literature that I observed too, starting with the idea that "humanitarian action is always political, and that it is impossible to adhere to 'classical' humanitarian principles such as neutrality, impartiality and independence" (Scott-Smith 2014, 6).

A recurring feature of studies of humanitarianism is a differentiation between its actions and its ideals. In one of the few anthropological collections covering the topic, Bornstein and Redfield (2011, 6) argue that "[h]umanitarianism […] emphasizes the physical (and increasingly the psychological) condition of suffering people above all else. Although it has several lineages in charity and beyond […] its institutionalized form defines itself primarily through exceptional states of misfortune." These authors look at both aspects of humanitarianism, the action and the values/ideals. They argue that independently of the motivations behind humanitarian actions, one common characteristic of contemporary humanitarianism is for its "actors to focus on the immediate needs of living humans in distress" (6). Bornstein and Redfield historically, professionally, and religiously situate humanitarianism and aid, and introduce the debate of worthy recipients of aid, by also discussing different understandings of giving. Mauss' *The Gift* is one way in which to understand how hierarchies are created and established, but Bornstein and Redfield also add that "the moral logic of both Islamic and Hindu traditions identifies appropriate recipients of aid by other criteria than simple suffering" (9). These ideas are contrasted to a more Christian conception of giving which "makes fewer distinctions between worthy recipients at a scriptural level" (10). Christianity is what they see as playing a role in the emergence of what they call secular humanitarianism. Nevertheless, they recognise (referencing Fassin) that "actual practice often demands distinctions regarding who is most 'in need' of humanitarian assistance," and that "such decisions

are inherently controversial" (Bornstein and Redfield 2011, 12) and create hierarchies of humanity. Indeed, the people of concern for secular humanitarianism are defined as 'needy victims', and "'need' likewise requires evaluation and confirmation, being weighed in a moral balance that abhors any suggestion of fraud or corruption. Secular neoliberal subjects are responsible selves, capable of their own development. […] Those who do not demonstrate the proper will to improve are morally suspect" (Bornstein and Redfield 2011, 13).[6] Eventually, these authors argue for the roots of contemporary humanitarianism as also being intertwined with "the larger trajectories of Enlightenment rationality, secularism, capitalism, and colonialism" (*ibid.*). It is important to stress how all these larger rationalities and trajectories participate in the workings of humanitarianism and the refugee regime; this is also perceivable in different studies that often focus on one particular rationality/trajectory, thus creating a wide range of approaches and theories from where to look at such regimes.

Bornstein and Redfield discuss four of the main strands of anthropological literature that are used to make sense of humanitarianism (2011, 22-24). The first one, as discussed above, is centred around Mauss' notion of 'the gift' and ideas of giving, suffering, and human universality. Then, there is the body of work built around "exceptional states, and the growing ethnographic attention to disaster, conflict, and displacement" (Bornstein and Redfield 2011, 22); scholars in this area often start with philosophers' like Walter Benjamin, Hannah Arendt, or Giorgio Agamben. In more contemporary works, the emphasis is placed around 'life' and its political status, drawing from Foucault's biopower, an interest in technologies and biosciences, and a focus on medicine and health. The last area they introduce is studies that look at

6. This is telling particularly in relation to what I will discuss in Chapter 4 and 5, in that UNHCR is increasing 'alleviating suffering' through 'the will to improve' – the latter having been studied by Li (2007) as a core element of 'development' through global capitalism.

institutions, professionals, interventions in practice, and how ideals of humanitarianism have found their way into governments and governance. What these two authors also stress is how there are still too few ethnographic or/and historical accounts of "humanitarian organisations, cosmologies, and encounters" (25). My work therefore feeds in here. It is not a work focused on morals, ethics and the politics of – and related to – humanitarianism, but it is one focused on how difference and hierarchies are produced through encounters. However, the hierarchies I show are not only those created to distinguish between individuals more in need, they are also those linked with inequalities and distinctions at times unintentionally/inexplicitly produced by humanitarian interventions and governance.

Fassin, one of the main scholars in this field, understands "humanitarian government" as "the deployment of moral sentiments in contemporary politics" (2012, 1). This implies that such government and governance are not restricted to my area of focus, they reach beyond aid interventions carried out by agencies like UNHCR. As Fassin notes (2012, 2), "humanitarianism has become a language that inextricably links values and affects, and serves both to define and to justify discourses and practices of the government of human beings." A governmentality approach to humanitarianism and to the refugee regime – based on Foucault's works and concepts – has for a long time been my angle of entrance into this area of study. Governmentality and Foucauldian theories are used to understand how refugees are managed in camps (see Malkki 1995a, Agier 2008), but also to study the role of international actors/humanitarian organizations in the governance landscape (see Ferguson and Gupta 2002 and the 'transnational apparatus of governmentality'). Yet what I came to realise while doing fieldwork, and while writing this thesis, is that literature within anthropology of humanitarianism also show us how something that

supposedly wants to 'help', or 'alleviate suffering', can indeed have the opposite outcome. The main contribution I therefore take from this area of study is how the deconstruction and questioning of humanitarian practices and discourses can bring to light the 'unexpected' consequences that can originate from the refugee regime's actions. Indeed, inequalities and hierarchies can be fostered by humanitarianism – in its different meanings and expressions. It is the works of anthropologists and other social scientists that focus on this latter 'quality' of humanitarianism that I now want to briefly introduce.

"Not just any human will do"[7]

My work will eventually show that secular contemporary humanitarianism, like the one embodied by UNHCR, produces hierarchies among refugee communities and therefore can also increase inequalities.

Fassin explains that the 'politics of life' "are politics that give specific value and meaning to human life" (2007, 500). These relate "to the evaluation of human beings and the meanings of their existence" (500-501). My work can be seen as a study of "the politics of refugee life." In the politics of life, a distinction is made between "which existences it is possible or legitimate to save" (501). It then follows a production of "public representations of the human beings to be defended" (*ibid.*). A politics of refugee life similarly produces representations, both public – in terms of publicity material and public image – and operational ones. For example, in the Burkinabè context I studied, representations of 'the refugee' built on simplified and crude notions of victimhood, poverty and vulnerability, legitimise which Malians to

7. Bornstein and Redfield 2011, 9.

assist and who not to assist. What is not included in Fassin's work though is how the 'human beings to be defended' themselves respond to the public representations associated with the politics of life. In Chapter 6 I focus extensively on how the refugees themselves reproduce, or not, such representations. They are the main actors of the refugee regime and humanitarianism, as without 'the people of concern' these constructions and systems would not exist.

Fassin highlights different inequalities and hierarchies that go hand in hand with humanitarianism, with a particular focus on two inequalities. The first one is between international and local staff of international NGOs, such as *Médecins Sans Frontières*. The second inequality is between "benefactors and victims." What these differentiations both signal, according to him, is how humanitarian action is "an enterprise emanating from the West" (Fassin 2012, 242). This "articulates the basis of the humanitarian movement: an impulse of moral sentiments from the rich toward the poor countries, from a world at peace to a world at war" (Ibid.). In my argument I will show how the refugee regime's action is often decontextualized in its localised interventions; in Burkina Faso this can take the form of, for example, reproducing neoliberal ideals in recent programmes. I will also highlight hierarchies of humanity, or more precisely hierarchies of refugeeness, as the inequalities I focus on are those produced or reinforced *among* the refugee population by humanitarian action – or inaction. By looking at this I also reveal "the profound meaning and aporia of humanitarian politics of life" (Fassin 2007, 502), whereby aporia means its intrinsic and insurmountable contradiction. My study is an ethnography of humanitarianism at the micro level, looking at how it plays out in the interaction between the current refugee regime in Burkina Faso and the realities – the people and the structures they inhabit – it encounters on the ground. It equally wants to show the 'aporia' of

humanitarianism by showing how inequalities and differences can be reinforced or produced in that encounter. I naively hope that such work can bring change, because humanitarian assistance can prove to be positively significant for, in my case, refugees' lives, while avoiding reinforcing hierarchies of humanity. This is not about denying the practicalities, and often times need, of assigning limited support, but about mitigating against such actions having long-lasting effects on representations, identities, and individuals already caught in multiple webs of inequalities.

Ticktin, building on Fassin, distinguishes between lives, between humanities of the 'people of concern' themselves. From her work, there are some points I particularly want to highlight. Firstly, the idea of "factors by which one could prove one's 'humanity' worthy of humanitarian exception" (Ticktin 2011, 3). In this specific instance the 'factors' she is referring to are "evidence of gendered forms of violence." What I focus on is different, but her analysis did influence my thinking and the notion that one needs to prove one's humanity is behind the idea I will develop relating to refugees' needing to prove their deservingness of assistance. In the context I studied, this often implies refugees needing to prove their (stereotyped) vulnerability or self-reliance. In contrast to Ticktin, I will not show explicitly how refugees need to prove they are 'morally legitimate' refugees. I will however show that to be a 'deserving refugee' one needs to correspond to what seems like the morally legitimate figure of the refugee, which is "outside time and place, outside history and politics" (Ticktin 2011, 11). In my case this is either a 'neoliberal refugee' or a 'vulnerable refugee'. The former corresponds to being an economically self-reliant, responsible, and independent individual, and I look at this figure in Chapter 4. The latter, as I will show in Chapter 6, means being an economically dispossessed refugee living in a camp. If possible she should also be a woman, a child, or a disabled or elderly person.

Another important argument Ticktin makes is how regimes of care "end up reproducing inequalities and racial, gendered, and geopolitical hierarchies" (2011, 5) and I do propose that the same is valid for the refugee regime. These politics of care are what she defines as a form of 'antipolitics',[8] one which does not allow spaces for change, actual structural, social, and political change that wants to deal with "problems of inequality, exploitation, and discrimination" (2011, 3). The refugee regime partly operates along a similar logic. Hierarchies can be created both at a global and more localised scale.

Daley (2013a, 2013b)[9] makes the point that humanitarian solutions and interventions are decontextualized arguing that contemporary humanitarianism in Africa reifies "material and hegemonic geographies" (2013b, 389) and supports the view that some spaces (the global North/West) are superior to places where humanitarian intervention is needed. She sees this as "partly bound up with neoliberal processes of 'accumulation by dispossession' within a hierarchical network of power relations" (2013b, 389).[10] In one work (2013a), she explores processes of identity construction and the lack of recognition and opportunities to manifest political agency for displaced people. Daley highlights how humanitarian solutions "tend to contribute to rather than alleviate the marginality experienced by the displaced" (2013a, 893). Indeed, the humanitarianism she studies is larger than the refugee regime as I look at it, with military humanitarian interventions also included in her purview. She focuses on more long-term 'solutions' and processes of marginalisation and inclusion from a 'citizen perspective,' while I look at the more everyday socio-economic inequalities and hierarchies reinforced or created by the current refugee regime.

8. I will go back to this in Chapter 4.
9. I am aware that Daley is not an anthropologist, but I introduce her work here nonetheless as there are important contributions from her work to my analysis.
10. Thus relying on Harvey's (2003, 2005) take on neoliberalism.

Other scholars in anthropology of forced migration have shown how humanitarian assistance is often decontextualized, doing so in order to show how vital it is for refugees and forced migrants themselves to be included in designing and implementing humanitarian programmes (e.g. Hammond 2008). The point Daley makes is more of a broader postcolonial critique. She argues that the interventions she analyses "are based on a reading of the region that ignores its historical and contemporary political economy and state-society relations, especially the differential inclusion or exclusion of social groups, as well as inter-community relations at the local scale" (Daley 2013a, 894). Her critique is not saying 'humanitarianism is all bad, it shouldn't exist'. Of course, humanitarian intervention, and refugee assistance and protection are "of critical importance at times of emergency" (Ibid., 908), yet when they become more long-term interventions, or introduce measures and programmes that are more than just emergency assistance, we need a more informed analysis and knowledge of the social and political economies in which they take place.

A similar approach is used in Donovan's study of infrastructuring in Northern Kenya, where he focuses on cash transfers. Donovan is interested in "the ways in which abstract universals become lived inequalities. Because global humanitarian biopolitics requires infrastructuring, it manifests in divergent and negotiated ways – ways that are not reducible to the humanitarian actors and logics alone" (2015, 733). I add that this is true also because humanitarianism (whether we see it through a Foucauldian approach, as an ensemble of biopolitics and anatomopolitcs or not) does not 'operate' in a vacuum, but in an already present and historicized social and political economy. Humanitarian interventions take place in existing regimes of structural inequalities. In line with these authors arguing that the practices of

humanitarianism are unequal, in this work I argue that how these inequalities and hierarchies take shape in Burkina Faso can be reinforced by the refugee regime reproducing specific (non-contextualized) figures of 'the refugee', as well as operating in ways that can eventually strengthen existing inequalities – notably by ending food and cash assistance in such a manner that those more affected by it were the refugees who were already struggling financially.

Where does this all leave me in relation to what humanitarianism is? My focus in this thesis is only on one part of it, that corresponds to, using Scott-Smith's words, "the dominant, Western, institutionalized humanitarianism of the modern age," which is first and foremost a "set of institutions and practices, which seek to provide short-term relief to suffering people" (2014, 7).[11] I narrow my attention to the refugee regime, and specifically as embodied by UNHCR. The particularity of this niche area of contemporary humanitarianism is that in addition to providing aid in the form of "food, water, shelter, and medical care to people in emergencies" (Scott-Smith 2014, 15) and being "a short-term activity, aiming at the relief of suffering in emergencies, which targets the whole world" (Ibid., 17)[12] UNHCR is also the advocate/'bearer' of refugee law and therefore international legal protection.[13] The latter element, I

11. This is one aspect of humanitarianism, the other one being an ethical moral stance. Indeed, those concrete activities undeniably have a specific historicity on which they are built, "a moral belief in the primacy of alleviating suffering, and, by extension, a belief in the moral worth of all humans" (Scott-Smith 2014, 18).

12. Yet, as Scott-Smith specifies, this modern humanitarianism is of course always changing and in the last two decades has expanded significantly, with nowadays "[l]onger-term tasks such as state building and reconstruction have been included under the humanitarian umbrella, and the 'cluster approach' now includes not just health and nutrition, but also education and agriculture. Humanitarianism has taken a significant slice of the development industry and now employs hundreds of thousands of people, spending billions of dollars each year" (2014, 17).

13. Monsutti (2005b, 5) describes international protection as follows: "The purpose of the two documents [1951 Convention and 1967 Protocol] is to protect fundamental rights (first of all, the right to life and physical safety) of people who are forced to flee their homes. When individuals are no longer protected by their own government, it falls to the international community (in the shape of the signatories) to intervene on their behalf. The UNHCR is supposed to complement governments by encouraging the signature of international conventions, by ensuring that refugees are treated accordingly and not forced to return to the country from which they have fled, and by seeking permanent solutions to refugee problems (HCR 1996a, 1996b)."

believe, makes the potential discrimination or inequalities induced by UNHCR's operation among refugee communities more problematic, as its activity should primarily be to promote and guarantee (human) rights. The two aspects – (material) assistance and protection – are often treated as a single frame when the refugee regime is discussed, in scholarly terms, but also in policy and mainstream discourses. While I am aware that the two aspects are not the same and could be addressed separately, both will be discussed in this work, as they both are entangled with the reproduction of hierarchies of refugeeness.

In addition to the authors cited above, there are obviously other anthropologists who focus on the more specific area I study too, namely forced migration and refugee studies. Yet as a larger framework I find anthropology of humanitarianism less restrictive, less narrowly focused on just the displacement experience, with more focus on large societal and/or global dynamics that we can then observe ethnographically in their encounters with refugees' lives. I thus propose to link anthropology of humanitarianism focused on the differences and hierarchies intrinsic in it, with economic anthropology, which will be discussed in the next section.

ECONOMIC ANTHROPOLOGY FOR/IN HUMANITARIANISM

Though taking inspiration from this idea of 'hierarchies of humanity' by Ticktin and Fassin's works, my main analytical framework for this dissertation comes from economic anthropology and in particular the idea of commodification. I believe this notion, used both heuristically and conceptually, is a fruitful way in which to bring to light how refugeeness and 'the refugee' are produced in the contemporary refugee regime. Simultaneously, it allows me to show the inequalities linked with the

decontextualization that seems to characterize part of the refugee regime's interventions. [14] When the political economy has been used to understand humanitarianism, it is often based on Mauss' concept of the Gift (2016). Indeed, this concept is one way in which to make sense of how hierarchies can be so intrinsically part of humanitarianism. Nevertheless, I propose in the following section that in the context of today's refugee regime, the commodification literature is better placed to make sense of what happens at a global level and in the encounters of that level with the more localised scale of urban refugees living in Burkina Faso.[15]

From gift to commodity

"Assistance is a right, not a gift/present" (Gramsci 2011 [1918], 12)

Exchanges and contracts can take the form of gifts, according to the founding work of Marcel Mauss (2016). Although we may think of gifts and presents as something resulting from pure generosity and selflessness, and the same can be said for the food and cash assistance that Malian refugees in Bobo-Dioulasso received for over three years, Mauss shows how gifts actually entail more. Indeed, they are "obligatorily given and received" (2016, 57) – reciprocity is key – they are not free nor entirely disinterested, and they are deeply meaningful and embedded in every

14. Fresia's work (2009) provides an insightful reflection on unexpected yet concrete effects of applying humanitarian interventions based on Western originated norms and categories to very different social, political, and cultural contexts. My work should therefore also be situated in continuation of such engagement.

15. "[I]t is important not to forget that 'the local' and 'the global' do not describe received empirical realities. They are analytic constructs whose heuristic utility depends entirely on the way in which they are deployed to illuminate historically specific phenomena" (Comaroff and Comaroff 1999, 294). By making this distinction I am therefore not implying that a locality or 'localised scale' is like a bounded spatial entity untouched by global phenomenon or other surrounding localities, and vice versa. I am aware this may seem like a "profoundly consequential understanding of scale" (Ferguson and Gupta 2002, 982), yet my work is overall showing that those different levels change and are intertwined and are separated all at the same time. See also point 3 in Chapter 5 about the awkward scales of capitalism for an example of my approach to this issue.

aspect of our societies. Gifts have hierarchical force; they can serve to establish or reinforce hierarchies between groups and individuals, especially if not reciprocated and their study brings that to light. “The unreciprocated gift (*don*) still renders the person who has accepted it inferior, especially when it is received without any spirit of return. Charity is still wounding for the person who accepts it, […] and all of our effort goes towards ridding ourselves of the unconscious and injurious patronage of the rich 'almoner'” (Mauss 2016, 177). In light of this thinking, humanitarianism and humanitarian assistance in particular have been conceptualised as based on a gift-relation in Mauss' sense (e.g. Harrell-Bond et al. 1992; Fassin 2012; Bornstein 2012).

To try to balance the domination-inferiority aspect in the gift-relation, people are expected to accept the gift and then reciprocate. Fassin (2012) explains how reciprocity is not really a possibility in the politics of compassion underlying today's humanitarianism. These politics involve solidarity and inequality simultaneously. “This tension between inequality and solidarity, between a relation of domination and a relation of assistance, is constitutive of all humanitarian government” (3). Such an understanding can explain how beneficiaries of assistance or aid often feel ashamed, and even hostility towards their 'helpers', because they find themselves in a position of receiving an apparently disinterested gift that seems to not require a counter-gift. And yet, as Fassin (2012) argues, the generous gift of aid could have a “counter gift in the form of an obligation linking the receiver to the benefactors – for example, the obligation on the part of the receivers sometimes to tell their story, frequently to mend their ways, and always to show their gratitude” (3). Yet it remains an unequal exchange. One could argue that in the case of refugees' assistance, in addition to acting in a certain way and in light of the durable solutions accepted by the international community, return to one's country of origin, *de jure* integration,

resettlement, or in any case cessation of the refugee status according to international norms, could represent the demanded reciprocity. Other expectations and duties that refugees hold, e.g. to be apolitical, to uphold national laws in the host country, or to engage in certain activities organised by humanitarian agencies, could also be analysed as aspects of the reciprocity expected from them.

When starting to think about my data from the perspective of economic anthropology, I thought that the concept of gift could be an appropriate one. This came mostly from observations I made during my first research trip to Burkina Faso in 2013, when I heard humanitarian field workers on multiple occasions complain about the refugees living there – 'not real refugees' – who "just ask for more and more" (Bardelli 2015, 44). Demands or complaints coming from the refugees were felt like a mis-appreciation of all the help the workers were giving them. The refugees should have been more grateful. This gratitude could have been interpreted as part of the reciprocity clause of a gift exchange. Yet, if one pushes the reflection further, this framework becomes less relevant – at least in my case. While individual humanitarian workers can be said to understand the attribution of refugee status and assistance as gifts in the Maussian sense,[16] refugees come to think of them more as economic assets on which they can capitalize upon if needed. Discussions around whether it was "still worth it"[17] or not to keep the status became common in the second half of my fieldwork. This is likely to therefore create incompatibility with expectations of how individuals should use the refugee status and with the obligation of giving, receiving, and reciprocating intrinsic with gift interactions and relations. Similarly,

16. In addition, the aid they deliver can be understood as a benevolent action, as demonstrated, for example, by the explanation the UNHCR BF national representative gave to me concerning why urban refugees received assistance: "after all, we're humanitarians… If we can help a bit more why wouldn't we do it?" (Ouagadougou, 13/07/2016).
17. These being the terms employed by my interlocutors (in French they would talk about whether "ça vaut toujours la peine"); I will discuss this specific issue in Chapter 5.

humanitarians may see their job and what they 'give' to refugees as such, but overall it is not them providing such aid, rather the organisations they work for. The Maussian 'Gift' has not been conceptualised for relations between an organisation/regime and individuals, but for interpersonal social relationships. Also, if we understand the category of refugees in terms of rights – they have a right to protection and assistance – this framework also proves to have some limitations, because these are technically owed to refugees, and thus not something that can be said to originate from a purely 'charitable spirit'.

This is where commodification processes and the commodification literature come in. Conceptualising the refugee status and the accompanying aid and protection as a gift becomes only partly relevant for explaining how urban refugees in Bobo-Dioulasso relate to their legal status and refugeeness. Importantly, the same can be said for the running of organisations like UNHCR. It is true that these organisations are also the workers in the field, thus emically allowing the use of 'the gift' to study the interactions from that perspective. Yet the way in which UNHCR more generally operates is closer to an entrepreneurial model than Mauss' theorisation of the gift, and the relations between the Agency and the refugees could often be seen as closer to those characterising a commodity society – to use Gregory's typological description (2015 [1982]) that I discuss in the next pages – than a gift society. Of course, in reality the point I am making is that it is not about something being either a commodity society or a gift society, rather objects and relationships fall in to both sorts of exchange dependent on the site, space, time and perspective, as the two exist simultaneously and they constitute yet additional terrains that refugees negotiate. Additionally, an analysis based on Mauss' Gift is usually centred on interactions and relations between individuals or groups; what I want and wanted to examine in this

dissertation is how refugeeness is constructed – often in hierarchical ways. The interactions between refugees and humanitarian workers are one of the elements participating in the construction of refugeeness, but they are not the only one. I felt that another approach was needed to make sense of the larger dynamics I was observing.

To better understand this argument, I need to make clear how I use 'commodification' and how I relate it to my central questions of the 'refugee' category and its hierarchies. I mobilise this notion and concept in two ways; firstly, by understanding it as a process of objectification and naturalisation, where something – refugeeness – goes through said process and ends up having a certain value or worth – the 'legitimate refugee' – while its social and political relations of production are concealed. The latter point relates to my second use, where commodification is an analytical tool, a lens to unpack the (social, political, and historical) production of 'the refugee' category.

Marx (1976) brought 'commodity' to the analytical forum; he tells us that a "commodity is, in the first place, an object outside us, a thing that by its properties satisfies human wants of some sort" (Ch.1, Section 1). In addition, an exchange needs to happen for a product to become a commodity and it must have a use-value (simply put its utility, the material use we make of it) and an exchange-value (its worth in terms of which other commodities it can be exchanged for). Analysing commodities was for him a crucial task in the broader goal of studying the capitalist economy. Marx argued that it is "this ultimate money form of the world of commodities that actually conceals, instead of disclosing, the social character of private labour, and the social relations between the individual producers" (Ibid., Ch.1, section 4). That is to say, it is with the study of commodities and how values (use and exchange values) are

assigned to those, that we can also comprehend “the social character of men's labour,” i.e. the social relation of exploitation between an employer and his employee (a capitalist and a producer/worker). Through the phenomenon that Marx calls 'commodity fetishism,' all the social relations between men (and women) in an economy are concealed, they become erased in the apparently natural and objective commodity.

Building from Marx and Mauss' works, Gregory (2015) argues that different forms of exchange – gift or commodity exchange in this case – characterise different types of societies and economies. The main distinction between the two is that “gift exchange establishes a relation between the transactors, while commodity exchange establishes a relation between the objects transacted” (Gregory 2015, 40). This is an element to keep in mind if we were to mainly analyse relations and exchanges between refugees and humanitarians/humanitarian agencies. A commodity exchange is one where private property is exchanged between two independent parties and therefore what is exchanged are 'alienable things' (Ibid., 6). The latter are things of which the ownership can be transferred from one person to another. Consequently, where private property does not exist, commodity exchanges do not exist. On the contrary, Gregory defines non-commodity exchange – gift exchange – as “an exchange of inalienable things between transactors who are in a state of reciprocal dependence” (Ibid.). This is the principal difference between a commodity economy (the alienable nature of the thing to be exchanged, the property right of the thing passed on to the person 'buying' it, and the independence between the transactors) and a non-commodity economy. It is important to underline how things can be “now gifts, now commodities, depending on the social context” (Ibid., xx) and how both types of exchange can be found in both types of society. Therefore, even when we qualify a

society as a commodity society, characterised by commodified relations, this does not exclude other types of exchange and relations – as gift ones – to be found.

As scholarly works keep taking on Marx's theories and other authors studying commodities, this concept has increasingly been applied to understand things other than just 'material things.' What helped to get to this point, I believe, is Marx's idea of commodity fetishism. Taussig explains that "commodity fetishism can be glossed as that which makes people into things and things into people" (2010[1980], xiv). In other words, commodities are believed to naturally produce the value they are assigned (Ibid., xvi). This feature is an integrant part of the capitalist system, as its tendency to objectify the human condition – in my case the tendency of humanitarianism to objectify refugeeness. Taussig tells us that in capitalist epistemologies and economies "social relationships and intellectual complexities" are reduced "to the one metaphysical abstraction of usefulness" (Ibid., 16) – this idea comes from Marx and Engels' work. If I find Marx and Engel's arguments too deterministic and linear overall, I will nonetheless return to this particular aspect in Chapter 4 in relation to current tendencies of the refugee regime. What needs to be stressed is how commodification processes are crucial in this tendency to objectify the human condition and therefore relations too. In addition, it is also important to note how 'commodification' applies not only to things,[18] but also emotions and relations, as other anthropologists have shown. Kockelman, for example, in his semiotic ontology of the commodity, shows how local villagers in Guatemala chosen by an NGO for an ecological project had to "perform an internalization of the

18. Services, like education or health services, have also been analysed as being commodified; whether humanitarian assistance and protection qualifies as a service and whether I should have analysed it in a similar way, is a long debate that I have chosen not to engage with in this thesis, maybe wrongly so. These services have often been approached as going through commodification processes when being privatised, as they previously belonged and were controlled by the state, while this is not necessarily the case of humanitarian action and UNHCR in particular, nor it is what I want to use 'commodification' for.

underlying ethics and projected outcome of the project's intervention" (2006, 78) in order to satisfy the customers/tourists, who needed to be reassured they were doing eco-fair-tourism. This was described by the author as immaterial labor, defined as "a reflexive mode of production, which is orientated to producing a relatively immaterial commodity" (Ibid., 97).[19] In Kockelman's view, one that I share, we can use the concept of commodity and commodification when studying non-material objects/subjects/issues. His study brings him to suggest that the 'anthropology of new forms of liberalism' should focus not only on the outcomes and consequences of commodification processes, "but also its conditions: the quantification and standardization of various domains of social life [20] and the subsequent commensuration of these quantified and standardized domains" (Ibid., 78). In this dissertation I attempt to show both these aspects of the commodification of refugeeness. I now turn to summarising what I take from the literature on commodification and commodities.

The commodification of refugeeness

Van Binsbergen (2005), building on Appadurai's work (1988), [21] defines commodification processes as "the ways in which things and social relations are effected by the market (i.e. are 'commodified')" (Van Binsbergen 2005, 11). Through these processes, everything tends to take on a value (use, exchange, or other) in a way

19. This is not exactly what happens in the case I look at and refugees are not explicitly required by humanitarians to perform in a precise way for them (refugees *and* humanitarians) to earn out of it, but it may well be seen as a similar process. Refugees' practice and discourses have been studied through a performance paradigm before (see Chapter 6).
20. This is what also happens in humanitarian interventions, as I say in Chapter 4 and as authors as Scott-Smith (2014) have shown.
21. As pointed out by Tsing (2013), this author, in his most recent works (e.g. Appadurai 2012), does not necessarily link commodities and commodification processes with a capitalist system, but rather sees commodity as characterising any exchange. This is not my take, nor it is within the scope of this thesis to enter into that debate.

that seems 'natural' and objective; a variety of aspects of societies are therefore economically valued in one way or another. Things, events, or chances are either 'worth it' or not. In the same way, structures and institutions are also influenced by such a worldview. Commodification processes are multidirectional and multilinear (Ibid., 15) yet do not take over every aspect of society or every social interactions. Some aspects of refugeeness will be more characterised or affected by these processes than others. By this I mean that in particular instances specific constructions of 'the refugee' will be more valued, and why or how they became more valued, deemed more worthy, will not be obvious unless we unpack those constructions. Hence, to be understood, refugeeness and the different representations of 'the refugee' need to be contextualized, as they can take different forms in different places and times, and have a variety of outcomes for the people possessing the legal status. By deconstructing the commodification of refugeeness in the context I am studying, I will also highlight what can arise from it – notably the production of new, or the reinforcement of old, inequalities and vulnerabilities, and refugees starting to capitalize on their own legal status. The hierarchies produced by the refugee regime, I argue, are in this way brought to light.

Commodity, commodity societies, and commodification processes are therefore not only concepts, they can also be used as an analytical approach. Scott-Smith (2013), building from Marx's analysis of commodities as an analytical tool to better understand the whole economic system and Taussig's (2010) work on commodity fetishism, argues that studying humanitarian materialities/technologies “can illustrate tendencies in the world of relief” (920). In his analysis, he looks at how such objects come to be, are presented, used, and perceived by the workers and aid agencies. My study will also build on works such as Scott-Smith's, to eventually highlight how the

use of the concept and 'lenses' of commodity in studying the humanitarian context, allows for unveiling its practices, discourses, and structural tendencies. This framework also allows me to uncover the forced migrants' experiences themselves.

I therefore rely on 'commodification' as an analytical tool to look into the (re)production process that 1) assigns a certain value to the 'thing' that eventually 2) appears as objectively – in the sense of naturally and unquestionably – having certain characteristics and features. In my case, I use this to analyse how, in the context of self-settled Malian refugees living in Bobo-Dioulasso, the 'worthy' or 'legitimate' refugee (either a vulnerable/victim one, or a self-reliant/neoliberal one) is produced and, by extension, reproduced, negotiated, and represented. More precisely, I look at which dynamics and interactions play into those objectification processes (e.g. discourses, programmes, expectations from humanitarians, refugees' daily practices, security concerns); what is left out by/from them (e.g. the consideration of existing structures of inequalities and their role in the possibilities to negotiate with the category, contextual characteristics of the job market); what is obscured through those processes (e.g. the refugee regimes' rationalities, asymmetrical power relations between various groups of actors and regimes, the political reasons for the flight); and what are some consequences of those productions (e.g. how those constructions are distributed, the exclusion from the category of the deserving refugee, the capitalization on the status).

To sum up, if we talk commodity, we talk production and how it is concealed (Marx 1976, Taussig 2010, Tsing 2013). If we unveil commodification, we unveil such productions, in my case both the production and construction of 'the refugee', as a historico-political generalised figure, and in particular the (re-)production of 'the refugee' as embodied in practice in different ways by the people concerned by it.

Saying and showing how refugeeness is commodified allows us to understand how the category and label 'refugee' is currently represented, reproduced, and negotiated. It also brings understanding to how hierarchies of refugeeness can be produced through different constructions of 'the refugee' category and how those constructions interact with the refugees' lives, and therefore also how those processes increase inequalities among refugees.

Capitalist economy and neoliberal ideals

In its simplest conceptualisation, capitalism should be used in its adjective form, as a qualifier of a specific economic system based on a particular mode of production (centred on accumulation and profit of the few holding the means of production) and characterising Western European societies from the Industrial Revolution onward. This simplest conceptualisation is however long gone, both in reality and in theory. In reality, because time has passed and an economic system takes different shapes and forms in different spaces and times, and in theory because it is now widely recognised that it has never been *just* an economic system understood as an independent 'bubble'.

According to Dardot and Laval (2010), neoliberalism is in part distinctive from capitalism, as it has a stronger ideological component, but it is also related to it, as it supports it and spreads it precisely through this ideological component. For the two authors, neoliberalism is 'more' than capitalism, in that it subsumes much more of the social realm by producing neoliberal norms and subjects.[22] The state, or governing body, far from retreating as it may have been encouraged to in a primarily capitalist

22. Their view of capitalism is thus mostly about it being 'just' an economic system characterised by a specific mode of production. For the sake of simplicity, I will take this as a starting point. If my analysis was more centred around these notions, I would approach capitalism as 'global capitalism', especially in its contemporary and heterogeneous forms, following the works of Bear et al. in the series 'Theorizing the Contemporary – Generating Capitalism' (2015).

political economy and via the liberal doctrine, is here a main actor in extending the market logic (Dardot and Laval 2010, 37).

Yet these terms, and particularly neoliberalism and neoliberal, are not unequivocally used nor uncritically accepted by anthropologists and social scientists. Ong's *Neoliberalism as Exception* opening line is telling about these debates: "*Neoliberalism* seems to mean many different things depending on one's vantage point" (2006, 1). Not only this term can become a catch-all term (see Venugopal 2015), but critiques have questioned its analytical usefulness,[23] as well as what risks being overlooked in our analyses and "our representations of social, political, and economic life" (Ganti 2014, 99) by focusing excessively on what we see or define as neoliberal. I do think it can be a useful concept for what I discuss in this thesis – especially in its adjective form – and particularly for deconstructing or questioning one of the contemporary reproduction of 'the refugee' (specifically looked at in Chapter 4), which ends up creating hierarchies between Malian refugees. I thus now turn to explain how I use this term in my work.

I mostly rely on Hilgers' work (2011, 2013) to make sense of what I qualify as neoliberal ideals, qualities, and practices in my work. As an anthropologist, he sees that a key question to ask vis-à-vis these 'representations and practices', as he calls the two components, concerns how they "are produced and disseminated on the global scale" (2011, 351). He argues that different anthropological understandings of neoliberalism have at least three common traits: first, the term neoliberalism is applied:

23. See Clarke 2008, who analyses 'neo-liberalism' as promiscuous, omnipresent, and omnipotent; in relation to neoliberalism's supposedly totalizing and universal character, and the consequences of this for anthropological analyses see Kingfisher and Maskovsky 2008.

> "to a radicalised form of capitalism, based on deregulation and the restriction of state intervention, and characterised by an opposition to collectivism, a new role for the state, an extreme emphasis on individual responsibility, flexibility, a belief that growth leads to development, and a promotion of freedom as a means to self-realisation that disregards any questioning of the economic and social conditions that make such freedom possible" (Hilgers 2011, 352).

The second point Hilgers makes, is that scholars in anthropology generally distinguish between theoretical neoliberalism and practical neoliberalism[24] – the latter being "characteristically embedded in the categories of perception and practices of social agents and institutions" (Ibid.), and similarly they acknowledge that neoliberal policies can be and have been implemented in a variety of ways. What is defined or perceived as neoliberal in the United Kingdom or in Burkina Faso is thus not necessarily the same phenomenon. When in this thesis I refer to the fact that the 'neoliberal refugee' promoted by the refugee regime is a decontextualized one (or more precisely a Western concept applied in a decontextualized way outside of its context of production), I am referring to this view. Thirdly, anthropologists are often interested in what has been termed the cultural project of neoliberalism, or "the production and global spread of […] neoliberal practices and representations,"[25] therefore generally sharing the idea that "the emergence and development of neoliberalism is the result of a historical process that has led to the emergence of a

24 .What Ferguson (2010) distinguishes as neoliberal policy and neoliberal doctrine.
25. Bracke (2016, 62) for instance understands neoliberalism as "a cultural project bent on reshaping the structure of social relationships and subjectivities."

specific form of capitalism" (Hilgers 2011, 351). In reality, this 'specific form' is actually 'various forms'.

These main common traits mirror three kinds of approaches to neoliberalism: the culturalist approach, the systemic approach, and the approach through governmentality.[26] From the latter, I take the idea that a "drive towards individual responsibilisation and the self as enterprise is a major principle of the neoliberal art of governing" (Hilgers 2011, 358); this governmentality comes about when market forces enter the political domain (Ibid., 359).[27] This is one of the central aspects of what I qualify as 'neoliberal ideals' and the 'neoliberal refugee' reproduced by the refugee regime; in particular, what I term the 'neoliberal refugee' is a specific figure and representation of an economically self-reliant, responsible, and independent individual refugee. Relatedly, and to summarize what I said so far, in the context of the 'neoliberal refugee', this means exploring *how* responsibility is so individualised, *why* that is promoted by UNHCR and other relevant bodies and *what* the implications are for individuals in practice. Indeed, one important aspect Hilgers also stresses is that independently of the approach we follow, "neoliberalism appears as the common denominator in the production of inequalities in our contemporary societies" (2011, 361).

Dardot and Laval (2010), using a Foucauldian framework, hence argue that the neoliberal rationality is characterised by the autonomisation and the extension of the market logic outside of it. While I find these two authors too deterministic and structuralist overall in their conceptualisations, I do share parts of their approach. Particularly the way it allows us to understand commodification as being part of this

26. In similar fashion, Ferguson argues for "analytical distinction between neoliberal 'arts of government' and the class-based ideological 'project' of neoliberalism" (2010, 166).
27. Hilgers (2011, 2013) develops at length and in various articles the nuances of these approaches, and I thus refer to him for further dicussions.

'move' of neoliberal logics and ideals from the economic realm to the ways in which the social and political work. Such take helps make sense of why areas in which literal commodification (in the sense of a material transformation of a product into a commodity that can then be exchanged for money) is not possible can still be affected by commodification processes as defined above, particularly in the objectification process that non material things, like a category or a social construction, can go through. Simultaneously, it is important to stress once more that those processes, whether they concern the material or immaterial, are never linear or entirely determining.

Indeed,

> "[n]eoliberalism is mobile, neither unified nor uniform, because the policies associated with it are sites of struggle, conflict, negotiation and power relations in a multiplicity of contexts, but everywhere it contributes to the extension of a specific conception of market rationality to nonmarket domains (Brown 2005)" (in Hilgers 2013, 78).

It is in relation to nonmarket domains that I therefore mostly use these concepts and their various declensions. For Dardot and Laval (2010, 43), a feature of market rationalities entering nonmarket domains is the need to 'evaluate' in the sense of assigning a value (in the form of 'price', thus an economic value, in their argument) to individuals, relations, or practices. In the case of my thesis, and my argument, I discuss a similar process applied to refugeeness and as a consequence to refugees themselves. In the various empirical chapters, I show how the commodification at work in the refugee regime in Burkina Faso – namely, the commodification of refugeeness – is problematic as it increases or creates inequalities and hierarchies

between the people of concern. For example, the last empirical chapter discusses how refugees in Burkina Faso are now evaluated on their supposed vulnerability, this being based on crude and simplified criteria and boxes to tick. The refugees' worth is measured in 'vulnerability.' In Chapter 5, it is the refugees themselves that are pushed to evaluate the worthiness of the refugee status. While in Chapter 4 it is the 'neoliberal refugee' that seems to prevail as the one worthier of support.

A need to evaluate and prove one's worth/quality is not a feature that only characterises commodification or 'neoliberalisation' processes; indeed, a variety of 'values' and 'worth' (social, moral, cultural, etc.) are present in many domains of social life, including in humanitarian interventions as discussed above with Fassin (2007) and Ticktin's works (2011). However, within the perspective adopted in this work, and following the definition given above of commodity and commodification, the assignation of a value/worth[28] is an important component for such processes to be defined and analysed through an economic anthropology perspective. For instance, this assignation is also presented as a feature of capitalist relations – and relations between refugees and humanitarians (here embodying their institutions) could be analysed as such. For Li (2014, 116) what characterises the emergence of capitalist relations is "the erosion of noncommoditized relations through which people may previously have been able to access food, labor, land, and help to weather crises." It is important to remember that this does not mean that every relation that is or was noncommodified was a "cozy utopia," but more people had access to, in the case studied by Li, goods and lands (Ibid.). In my work I stress the problematic aspects that both a capitalist economy and neoliberal project carry with them, but it is

28. Which is in this case is also an economic value, as the refugees' worth/value become economically significant as they form the basis on which a certain amount of assistance or support is provided (or not) to them. Though of course they are not *only* economically significant, in that the 'worthy refugee' is also the morally legitimate one in the eyes of humanitarians.

important to recognise that such political economies do not just come and establish from a tabula rasa, and that capitalism is not a totalizing system. “While I agree that all the land and natural resources of the globe may one day be incorporated, I argue that a great many people have and will have no part to play in production organized on the basis of profit” (Li 2014, 4). The same is valid for the refugee regime: it is not commodifying – that is, reproducing commodification processes such as the commodification of refugeeness – in its entirety and homogeneously.

What seems to be characterising the emergence and predominance of capitalist and commodified relations is the lack of choice. One cannot but try to fit in with that system, as alternatives are slowly erased. The current refugee regime could therefore be analysed through this framework as well, where the choice of how refugeeness can be lived and embodied, if one wants to get assistance and increasingly also protection, is reduced. Hierarchies have most likely always been intrinsic to the refugee regime, and equally the commodification of certain aspects of it as well – and both have been looked at. For instance, Voutira and Harrell-Bond (using Mauss' Gift to make sense of hierarchies, giving, and reciprocity) highlighted the “whole chain of hands and networks of power” (1995, 211) that travels, with aid goods, from the donors at the top, down to the recipients, who are refugees living in camps in their study. Concerning commodification, studies looked at food and material assistance being sold or exchanged by refugees (Waldron 1987), or refugee ID cards traded to increase access – also by non-refugees – to aid and social services (Callamard 1993, 1994). In a different vein, but within the same arena, Daley (2013b) analysed the role of celebrities as a characteristic of the commodification of humanitarianism. Yet such forms commodification are not those I am more interested in, as they correspond to a

meaning of the term I less focus on, namely the marketisation of material aspects of aid or humanitarianism.[29]

The phenomenon I look at, the commodification of refugeeness, is somewhat different, yet more so in the approach I chose to look at it, than its expression on the ground. Indeed, an 'ideal refugee' is always historically and politically situated, which means that since the category started being used there has always been the reproduction of specific figures and representations of 'the refugee' that were more valued than others. Nonetheless, I think that my approach is relevant and appropriate also in light of the broader contemporary tendencies of the refugee regime. The latter might have indeed always participated in objectifying and homogenising specific types of ideal refugees (and an analysis primarily based on concepts such as 'governmentality' or 'bureaucracy' could also show it), but it currently seems to be undertaking related processes –in terms of commodification/objectification or in terms of marketisation[30] and 'neoliberalisation' – in other domains too. For example, the innovation turn, the entrepreneurial and results-based management of its operations and staff, the increase in partnerships with private actors, and the use of strategies for cost reduction goals. These practices, in my opinion, make an approach based on economic anthropology and commodification an interesting and perhaps epistemologically coherent way of looking at today's refugee regime as I observed it in Burkina Faso.

29. Chapter 5 is focused around the possibilities of capitalizing on the refugee status, of making an economic asset out of the legal status; this might seem closer to a type of 'commodification' as those just described, but it actually is not a transaction where something is sold in exchange for money, analytically it is not exchangeable in that commodity logic, but rather it is something that can be cashed in, yet which becomes seen and treated in that way according to circumstances that are not the same for all refugees.

30. Which is another way of defining commodification, particularly if we adopt in a literal way the definition cited above of Van Bisbergen (2005) and follow that strand of economic anthropology and the analyses of the marketisation of various domains of life.

In my analysis I am neither studying 'classical' economic relations nor unveiling class relations whereby "accumulation for some depended on the value they extracted from their neighbours" (Li 2014, 139) and arguing that this applies to the relation between the refugees and, for example, UNHCR. One could build that argument but it is not my aim. I am using this approach as a lens through which to study the refugee regime on the ground, its tendencies, and its encounter with the refugees and ultimately trying to make sense of how the refugee regime can make refugees' lives more unequal by unpacking how 'the refugee' is reproduced.

This lens, in addition to showing how these reproductions play out differently for different people, also lets me stress how most of the humanitarian policies and programmes which play in those reproductions and that I analysed in Burkina Faso could be described as decontextualized. This can in part be explained by the neoliberal ideals that UNHCR and other aid agencies seem to promote or support, which can have additional hierarchical or exclusionary effects (in accessing assistance, protection, or services, as I discuss in Chapter 4). As Hilgers contends, to understand what is usually called the implementation of neoliberal policies, we should consider "the historicity of spaces and institutions where such policies are set in motion and unfold" (2013, 76), as well as "the systems of dispositions that shape the representations and practices of social agents" (Ibid.).[31] When I talk about UNHCR's neoliberal ideals, these are mainly reproduced, conceptualised and shaped by a Western historicity and approach to it. Yet they are applied to a different context, West Africa, where neoliberal representations and policies unfold differently. Of

31. This last reference corresponds to his understanding of 'culture', which is based on Bourdieu's work (1990). An important component of 'successfully' implementing neoliberalism for Hilgers is that of the modification of individual dispositions: "the generic disposition induced by neoliberalism is an organising principle of the self, of the self's relation to the self, and of its relation to others, articulated towards the maximisation of the self in a world perceived in terms of competition. […] However, here again the mechanisms that regulate self and bodies meet resistance. […] Domestication is never total" (2013, 83).

course there are some common grounds, but extremely significant processes such as colonialism, decolonisation, and structural adjustment policies make them vastly different. If we are to study how neoliberalism happens and is implemented, we thus need "to consider the process of their [policies] production, the historicity of places and institutions where neoliberalism is deployed and the historicity of dispositions that embody it" (Hilgers 2013, 78).

As Ferguson says, Western and African neoliberalism are not the same and should not be approached in the same way (nor are those two monolithic and homogenous types of neoliberalism). Neoliberalism in Western Europe or North America is often understood as not only a macroeconomic doctrine but also as practices and associated policies, and what Hilgers defines as specific dispositions. It thus also implies "the development of new technologies of government, responsibilized prudential subjects, and so on" (Ferguson 2010, 173). In the African context, what is generally called 'neoliberalism' does not refer to the same, as it primarily points to "all the policy measures that were forced on African states in the 1980s by banks and international lending agencies, under the name of 'structural adjustment'" (Ibid., 172). Ferguson argues "that the hasty and uncritical application of ideas of neoliberalism-as-rationality to Africa is thus clearly a mistake, based on a simple confusion" (Ibid., 173). Mama (2007), in addition to directing us to African scholarship that showed this (Mkandawire 1999; Mkandawire and Soludo 1999), also underlines how "[t]hese externally defined policies are dogmatically applied to Africa as if they were universally valid" (Mama 2007, 3). The Western neoliberal governmentality and/or policy implementation cannot be simply reproduced elsewhere – yet it can be argued that this is what certain actors try to do (e.g. see what Daley 2013a qualifies of neoliberal imperialism).

When the refugee regime originates in 'the West' but operates elsewhere, its operations can increase the inequalities that are reproduced in this political economy.[32] Daley argues that "[a]ttempting to resolve displacement without attention to the wider political economy of the state, local configurations of power and access to entitlements will inevitably lead to unsustainable solutions" (Daley 2013a, 909). I add that such implementations and operations can also participate in the reproduction of hierarchies of refugeeness, as one of the idealised figures of 'the refugee' promoted by refugee regime is based on Western neoliberal ideals. In light of what discussed before, we might say that refugeeness is in this instance commodified according to a Western neoliberal historicity and context. This can be seen as one of the characteristics of the current refugee regime. Yet, precisely by looking at how 'the refugee' category is (re-)produced and which figure is more valued in the context where I did my study, I can also show when other dynamics take place, when relations and situations are not commodified. Additionally, this figure of 'the neoliberal refugee' is present in Burkina Faso at the same time as the one of the 'vulnerable refugee', and both are decontextualized and very hard to fulfil or reach for Malian refugees living in Bobo-Dioulasso.

A final theoretical point I want to make is that humanitarianism and the refugee regime have been approached from a number of angles, yet one that is often used and that I have not discussed in great detail, is the Foucaldian one. This can be used from a neoliberal governmentality approach, as I mentioned above, or from his

[32]. This is not the only case. A similar argument can be made for a great deal of 'development programs', particularly those aiming at "neoliberal subject creation in the context of development interventions," as those studied by Sukarieh (2016, 1202), in the context of Jordan in the late 1980's and 1990's, where "the introduction of a market economy exacerbated class divisions and centralized wealth in the hands of the few" (1209).

broader theories, which have been used in particular to understand camps and other containment spaces by relying on his conceptions of power, governmentality, discipline, and biopolitics. I refer to Foucauldian terms and concepts in parts of this dissertation, particularly in Chapter 6, as Foucault's work and the scholars who elaborated this literature further have influenced my thinking. Indeed, I thought for a long time that this dissertation would have a predominantly Foucauldian framework, due to the fact that a significant number of authors in forced migration and refugee studies take inspiration from the philosopher's work. The likes of Malkki (1995a) and Agier (2008) relied to varying extent on Foucauldian conceptions of (bio)power and theories of governmentality. In general these works tend to look at refugee camps, but theories of governmentality and its various forms of power are certainly applicable to societies at large (Nadesan 2008; Foucault 1994).[33]

Forced migration and refugee studies' literature based mostly on Foucauldian theories and Agamben's idea of 'state of exception' (2003; himself starting from Foucault) is very much orientated towards showing the 'abuses' of the humanitarian system, or at least the rigidity and domination refugees face, particularly while living in camps. Without denying the hardship that comes hand in hand with forced migrants living in camps and elsewhere, these approaches are too 'oppressive' in the sense that they leave little or no space for the refugees' agency; if not in terms of resistance and contestation (Agier 2008), then certainly not in terms of the 'normality' that can be found in such spaces (Bardelli 2015). Similarly, they do not allow room for how some spaces, interactions, or people, may not conform to those governmentalities, or consider the refugee regime as the only/major producer of

33. Though Foucault's work in postcolonial writings and theories is contested territory. For an interesting discussion about Foucault, his work, and colonial and postcolonial experience and writing, see Legg (2007). See also Walters (2012) and his extensive book/review/discussion on governmentality, including what have been put forward as major limitations.

oppression and barriers that refugees can face. Focusing excessively on concepts such as domination/oppression or resistance, we may end up giving salience to issues that the refugees themselves may not experience or perceive as significant.

As Fresia points out, studies based mostly on Foucault and Agamben's ideas when looking at refugee camps, risk missing out on a lot of 'context': historical and political context of the use of 'camps' in humanitarian intervention, but also local contexts in which these spaces are found. Works focusing on humanitarian domination often give "a highly intentional character to the mechanisms of social domination [in the camps] without sufficiently highlighting process of mediation, politicisation, or re-appropriation of such mechanisms by a variety of governmental, non-governmental, or intergovernmental actors" (Fresia 2007, 106). I would also include the role of refugees themselves in the re-appropriation of such mechanisms.

A similar risk[34] exists when approaching a regime or system through imposing terms such as those I use in my analysis. In particular, ideas like commodity society, commodification processes, neoliberalism, neoliberal ideals and neoliberal refugee can easily become totalising explanations of what I had set out to explore. Everything could make sense in light of those concepts, depending on how I define them – and precisely because they have been defined in so many different and loose ways.

If I just reproached governmentality approaches to not always give enough space or consideration to what 'escapes' the phenomenon/governmentality under scrutiny, my approach could be reproached the same. Yet I do think that this does not make it incompatible with the contextual and micro-level-grounded perspective I follow in my research. I acknowledge how important it is to also look outside of my main

34. In particular in relation to missing out contexts or who and what do not conform to that specific governmentality/rationale; giving too much attention to mechanisms that might not be central in people's lives; and fitting all that is observed in one single frame.

framework, and look for instances, relations, and moments in which, for example, commodification (taken as the concept) does not happen, or happens in unexpected ways. Particularly in Chapter 5 and 6 I highlight how the processes I studied are multi-faceted and impacted by a number of aspects that cannot be seized by thinking only in terms of commodification processes or neoliberal ideals. For example, what Assadeck decides to do with his refugee status cannot be understood without considering the current conflict in Mali and his need to feel safe/protected, which the refugee card gives him. It is therefore crucial to look for instances that nuance our theoretical choices and claims, not to disprove them, but rather to affirm that reality is immensely more complex than one or two concepts, and we cannot explain all we see by fitting it all in one framework or model.

I thus use Foucauldian approaches in the last empirical chapter when talking about discursive practices and issues of representations, as this analytical approach gives more space to look at the role of discourse in the legitimisation of certain rationales (such as capitalist and neoliberal ones), but not to make sense of the political economy of the refugee regime and other aspects of the refugees' lives.

I do not want to discard Foucauldian works, as his work and the scholars building on it remain useful to understand why and how discourses and representations matter. I just use different bodies of work for different analytical goals and even my more economic anthropology approach is somehow influenced by Foucault, as he remains the first analytical lens I was exposed to in my academic anthropological journey. Additionally, I believe that a more (post-)Marxist approach is compatible with a Foucauldian one: the way Foucault understood inequalities and class struggle – and therefore power relations which are, inherently, unequal – is just a larger, deeper,

more mundane-based and more fluid conceptualisation than the Marxist one, which remains based on a different society, time, and context (Laval et al. 2015, 14).

Eventually, economic anthropology's approaches allow me to move beyond the understanding of human actions as purely calculative and rational, as utilitarians would want it, and take into account more than just economic structures to look at a variety of different forces partly structuring my informants' lives. Indeed, this framework also highlights the agency of my interlocutors and how this can be more or less constrained (or enabled) by the context in which the agents find themselves, as well as social and power relations characterising that context. Economic anthropology also helps to deconstruct that context – particularly when used as an analytical tool, for example in the way I use commodification processes – which is also characterised today by a partially commodifying refugee regime, meaning a refugee regime that is reproducing commodification processes (here used as concept), notably the commodification of refugeeness. Additionally, it allows me to unveil some of the tendencies that UNHCR expresses through its programmes in Burkina Faso, such as the promotion of neoliberal ideals in the construction of a 'neoliberal refugee' and an entrepreneurial way of managing its operations. To use Taussig's words, “[i]t is not growth per se” or, in my case, the willingness to give refugees a job, “but the character and immense human significance of a society geared to accumulation for its own sake that is the cause for concern” (17). It is because we are aware of what capitalism, or neoliberalism for that matter, does in terms of producing inequalities, injustices, and degradation, that I question the workings of the current humanitarian system linked with those political economies, not because I find giving refugees job opportunities a bad idea. In my work I will show some of the consequences,

outcomes, and forms commodifying tendencies characterising (part of) humanitarianism can have.

A DIFFERENT APPROACH TO THE REFUGEE REGIME

The current literature does a good job of questioning the business that humanitarian assistance represents (see Chapter 4) and presenting the 'global history' of humanitarianism.[35] Similarly, there is a good deal of literature looking at humanitarian governance/governmentality and refugees' acts of resistance to this.[36] What is needed though are works studying how all these worlds and aspects intersect and how they only come to life in interactions with specific situations, locales, and histories.

In this dissertation I start from a generalised view of the refugee regime, by showing how a current tendency of the refugee regime, and UNHCR in particular, is to operate in line with the capitalist economy and follow neoliberal ideals. I also argue that refugeeness is going through commodification processes – i.e. the human, social, and political condition and the interactions constructing it are objectified, somewhat obscured. In light of the definition given in this introduction, particularly of (the construction of) refugeeness and commodification, I believe that unveiling these processes is one fruitful way to understanding how the category and refugee status are currently reproduced, negotiated, and represented in Burkina Faso. I then nuance these 'global' tendencies, by showing how the commodification processes I

35. See Ticktin 2011; Fassin 2012; Scott-Smith 2014; or Loescher 2001 for a specific history of UNHCR.

36. If the first one I said above is often too deterministic as an approach, Fresia's (2007) underlines how the second one is similarly homogenising, as refugees are presented as equally resourceful and resilient to the humanitarian regime. Both can thus have a tendency of over-generalizing that rarely applies to the heterogeneity found in displacement experiences.

look at are not smooth and linear ones, nor completed 'projects'. Capitalist economies, neoliberal ideologies, and humanitarianism (of which the refugee regime is a standard-bearer) are often described as universal claims and/or processes. Yet I strongly believe that "[g]lobal connections are made in fragments – although some fragments are more powerful than others. […] Some fragments are able to make themselves look whole. Honoring the fragment means acknowledging this power but not accepting it as a done deal" (Tsing 2005, 271). Similarly, the 'refugee regime' is not a supranational independent force that exists outside these fragments and its grounded outlooks, the refugee regime is made up by all its forms and expressions, as much in the interactions between a worker and a refugee 'in the field', than during the signing of a new policy in Geneva.

This thesis therefore aims at tackling different fragments of the refugee regime as it materialises in the everyday lives of Malians living in Burkina Faso. In particular I focus on two main 'scales' participating in the construction of refugeeness and consequent creation of hierarchies and inequalities: the 'global' level, meaning some of the larger rationalities and programmes undertaken by UNHCR, and the everyday experiences and interactions in Bobo-Dioulasso (of various actors, refugees, humanitarian workers, government officers, and locals), as one of the grounded expressions of the refugee regime. In the thesis I also illustrate the consequences a simplified (to re-produce certain 'better' subjects and ideals), decontextualized, and bureaucratised intervention can have on individuals and families, and field offices. The latter aim is not a new goal for forced migration and refugee studies, but I propose to tackle it from a different angle. This thesis' contribution lies in its analysis of how the encounter between the refugee regime and the refugees' complex, situated, and varied lives can produce inequalities and is experienced unequally. This

encounter is looked at through the study of the reproduction, negotiation, and representation of 'the refugee' category.

THESIS OUTLINE

Methodology is key in research – and this is what the first chapter looks at. Methodology is the larger frame in which a research effort and researcher interact. The chapter explores the worldview, the understanding of one's discipline, the reasons and motivations behind a specific research and all that relates to reflexivity, positionality, and ethics. As I consider all these aspects foundational to my work, it seemed appropriate to open my dissertation with this.

The following chapter builds the subsequent layer of these foundations: it is entitled 'Unravelling the contexts', and these contexts are 1) the contested history, politics, and conflicts of Mali; 2) an overview of the humanitarian intervention in Burkina Faso; 3) a brief discussion of Burkina Faso and its migratory backgrounds. These are all aspects that need to be discussed – even if briefly – in order not to promote a decontextualized understanding of the topic of this dissertation.

Then, the substantive chapters of my dissertation follow with Chapter 4: "'The refugee' reproduced: commodification processes and neoliberal ideals." In it I look at the political economy of today's refugee regime, and UNHCR in particular. The chapter takes a double perspective: the general/global tendency of the refugee regime on the one hand and the ways in which it plays out in the localised context of Burkina Faso, on the other. The aim of this chapter is to understand how the political economy of UNHCR and the refugee regime relates to the construction of refugeeness and the production of hierarchies and inequalities. I focus on UNHCR's funding system and

its shortcomings, the 'marketisation' of humanitarianism and the current tendency of seeing employment for refugees as a durable solution to displacement, and why I contend it is problematic. I eventually show how the refugee regime can commodify refugeeness, which in this case results in the reproduction and construction of a decontextualized and depoliticised 'neoliberal refugee' as the ideal one. I also show how whoever does not fit this is perceived as a non-deserving refugee, an aspect that I analyse further in the following chapters. Finally, I demonstrate how this economic ethos of the refugee regime can increase inequalities – accessing opportunities and assistance in particular – among the people it is supposed to support.

Chapter 5 "'The refugee' negotiated: when the refugee status becomes an economic asset" takes a more micro-level look at how the social and political economies in which the refugees find themselves significantly mediate their 'refugee experience' and the ways in which they can, or cannot, negotiate with their category and the refugee regime. I specifically look at what I call the capitalization of the refugee status, by asking how, when, and why the refugee status becomes an economic asset once the food and cash assistance ended for urban refugees in Bobo-Dioulasso. I recall some personal stories of three interlocutors; explain why it is possible for refugees to 'sell' their status; and present what I observed as being the dynamics that may push one person to do that. This brings me to argue that the encounter of the refugee regime with the refugees' lives plays out differently according to pre-existing regimes of structural inequalities in which my interlocutors' lives take place. In addition, this analysis shows how generalised and decontextualized humanitarian interventions can reinforce and/or create inequalities of various types. Importantly, this chapter will argue that refugeeness and the refugee regime have more significant 'impact' – when occurring with negative connotations –

on the lives of people already caught in various regimes of structural inequalities. Yet I simultaneously demonstrate how not every aspect of peoples' lives are commodified or capitalized upon. Finally, I highlight how not all ways of 'making money'/becoming economically entrepreneurial, are accepted by the humanitarian community. Once again, this produces hierarchies of refugeeness, in the sense of using crude representations and criteria to informally rank refugees as more or less deserving of aid. This last point is also the focus of the following chapter, though it is explored via a different approach.

Chapter 6, "'The refugee' represented: vulnerability as a proof of deservingness," looks at how the refugee category is discursively represented and understood by the various actors involved; this unveils how such discourses participate as well in legitimating certain differentiating practices. Its aim is to highlight why representations and discourses around the refugee category do matter and looks at the refugees' stories and perspectives on 'being a refugee', as well as humanitarians' ideals of refugeeness and vulnerability – this latter term being the key here. The chapter shows how there is a need to prove one's worth as a refugee (in order to be qualified as deserving of assistance) in a very specific, one-dimensional and Westernized way. The refugees do indeed reproduce this simplified discourse as well, at least 'superficially', as this is the only way they can prove their 'worth' as deserving refugees. This points once again to how hierarchies of refugeeness are created in both discourse and practice, but it does so from a theoretical perspective focused more on showing the power of labelling. Eventually, the three empirical chapters demonstrate how the contemporary refugee regime can create hierarchies of humanity and be intrinsically unequal, or unequally accessible to the people it is supposed to help.

2.

METHODOLOGY

Postcolonial and critical feminist studies have made clear since the 1970's and 1980's how knowledge is situated, comes from a precise standpoint, and is entangled in (and the result of) specific power dynamics. Who I am and where I come from, in personal and intellectual terms, shape my research: my presumptions, my approach to the field, my research methods, my access to the field, the ways I am perceived by my informants and the power dynamics between us. This, in turn, influences the data I found, what I was allowed to see and witness by the various actors I met, and ultimately influences the way I analyse my data.

I discuss these issues in this chapter, together with the reasons I chose this type of research, which 'tools' I used, the ethical concerns and issues intrinsic with ethnographic research, the dilemmas we have towards our interlocutors and our relations with them. In addition, I also examine the power differentials inherent in this kind of study and the challenging situations an ethnographer can find herself in. The latter point does not simply refer to the fact that ethnographers tend to go to places that are physically and/or socially far from home, where familiar amenities (whether it is internet access, running water, or medical facilities) may be harder to find. Ethnographic fieldwork is a lonely process whereby via its very 'nature' and the personal investment required, we experience intensified emotions, both highs and lows, and we mostly cope with it on our own. Fieldwork, as with many lonely endeavours, while often not discussed, can also reveal our fragilities.

Following the reflexive turn, anthropologists started acknowledging the imbalances and power relations that are inherent in our research, especially when carried out as a white person in a postcolonial context. Yet we still often fail to

address the things that can go wrong in fieldwork, for example the situations in which we are vulnerable. This can be partly explained by the implicit rule that fieldwork should be a 'rite of passage' for doctoral students in anthropology, and therefore challenges and difficulties must be part of it (The New Ethnographer 2018) – despite more and more anthropologists carrying out research in non-conventionally researched contexts.[37] There is a need to also recognise the emotions that are involved in this kind of research. While emotions are involved in all kinds of research, in this context they are constitutive of it. Indeed, "anthropological fieldwork […] is also a matter of living. Ethnographic research practice is a way of being in the world. All this engages the senses and emotions, and it takes time. It is in this mundane, day-to-day way that the question of ethics emerges in ethnographic research" (Malkki 2007, 178).

This chapter therefore also addresses fragilities in the field and connects these with the power differentials of the anthropological encounter. My rationale is two-fold: firstly because we need to talk about what goes wrong or makes us feel fragile during fieldwork. Secondly, and related to the previous point, such happenings greatly shape our research experience, our reading of the context in which we work, our relation with the interlocutors, and can ultimately make us reconsider what we do.

The chapter opens by detailing the specific research methods I used to gather my data. I then discuss my starting point in terms of personal and intellectual grounds. I consequently address a more 'physical' aspect of my research: my body as a research tool, as it shapes the first impressions my interlocutors have of me, and how I present myself to others/the outside. The following part of the chapter delves into ethics. I discuss two main themes under 'ethics': on the one hand, there is the ethical concern

37. For example Ho (2009) researching Wall Street.

towards our specific interlocutors, the 'do no harm' principle and the practical, bureaucratic ethical charts and forms we need to comply with and respect. On the other hand, there is the more broad ethical sense of a researcher, of how we present our 'subjects', how we participate or not in reifying hegemonic global power dynamics and inequalities. It is here that I will also explore the researcher's fragility, as the story I share made me undeniably aware of how unequal the anthropological encounter is. I conclude the chapter by explaining why this is an engaged research effort and discussing some methodological limitations of my work.

This particular chapter is as much about my research and my interlocutors and friends as it is about me. It should therefore be read within the reflexive movement of anthropology.

RESEARCH METHODS, RESEARCH SITE, AND INFORMANTS

I carried out ten consecutive months of ethnographic research in Burkina Faso from late September 2015 until early August 2016, and returned twice for one-month stays in November 2016 and December 2017. My aim was to study the encounter of the refugee regime with the forced migrants' lives; my 'field site' included all places and people that are part of that encounter: refugees, humanitarians, locals, and the spaces they occupy. “In ethnographic fieldwork, *methodology* rarely means a set of standard tools and techniques applicable independently of context. The settings in which the anthropologist finds herself shape the day-to-day practices and the 'tool kit' of field research” (Malkki 1995a, 47). I mainly relied on critically 'hanging-out'[38] and

38. What Roy (2016, 82) calls 'ethnographic hanging out' and Rodgers (2004, 48) defines as a “relevant, important and ethically desirable” research method, especially in the contexts of research with forced migrants.

participant observation, informal discussions and interviews, both semi-structured and unstructured (see Russell 1994; Beaud and Weber 2003) with refugees and the staff of various organisations engaged in the humanitarian assistance operation in Burkina Faso. The majority of my interlocutors were Malian refugees living in Bobo-Dioulasso, the second city of Burkina Faso, thus self-settled in an urban context. When I arrived in Bobo-Dioualsso in October 2015 there were 1'083 registered urban refugees, divided in 344 households.[39] They live scattered in the city and as clarified in the next chapter, they have the right to work and to rent or buy property.[40]

I used a purposive sampling approach for the humanitarian staff, and snowball sampling for the Malian refugees, making sure to target a diverse group of individuals and households. For the refugees this meant making sure that I would spend time with people of different backgrounds, gender, socio-economic classes, and origins. Establishing contacts for this research was straight forward, as I had conducted research in the same country for my master thesis. Upon my arrival in Ouagadougou I called my previous contacts at CONAREF: it was important to meet with them first, before going to UNHCR, as they did not like being disregarded, and went to see them with a written request to carry out research with urban refugees in Bobo-Dioulasso. In reality, this was not required, as I would have been spending time and meeting with self-settled refugees at their own houses, and did not need permission to enter the research area as I previously had to do to access the refugee camp. Nevertheless, I also wanted access to CONAREF staff, and thus made an official request to carry out my research among the communities of Malian refugees living in Bobo-Dioulasso,

39. In January 2017 they were 770 individuals, divided in 249 households; in January 2018 they were 390, divided in 122 households (http://data2.unhcr.org/en/country/bfa). As I will explain in Chapter 5, this stark difference does not mean that most refugees in Bobo-Dioulasso returned, rather that most de-registered – independently of whether they applied for the return grant and/or if they actually returned.
40. When in this work I talk about 'urban refugees' I am referring to refugees living in an urban setting, it is not my intention to reify characteristics that have historically been associated with the figure of an 'urban' in contrast to a 'rural' refugee within UNHCR's classification system (see Glasman 2017, 349).

and with other actors involved. In the Ouagadougou's office they provided me with the contact of the CONAREF official in Bobo-Dioulasso. Once they gave me the sign-off, I reached out to my old contacts at UNHCR BF; while most had gone onto operations in different countries, they gave me the contacts of the new people I needed to meet. To these new officers, I also asked permission to work with the refugees in Bobo-Dioulasso, in addition to setting up interviews with them and their colleagues and making sure to visit UNHCR's offices every time I would go back to Ouagadougou. I was also provided with the contact details of partner organisations and workers that were supporting UNHCR's work with urban refugees in Bobo-Dioulasso. Concerning access to my main interlocutors, the Malian refugees themselves, my first contact was a cousin of one of my previous research participant (that used to live in the camp of Sag-Nioniongo in 2013 and 2014). Following this first participant, 'entering the field' was quite straightforward and quick. I was fortunate, as a few days after my arrival in Bobo-Dioulasso there was an official meeting between humanitarian workers and refugees that I could attend and my phone book was quickly full of numbers to call in the following days and weeks.

I met with the humanitarians prevalently in their offices in Ouagadougou and Bobo-Dioulasso, but also in some public circumstances when events where organised for the refugee community in Bobo-Dioulasso. In relation to the refugee population, I would meet my interlocutors mostly at their houses, but also at their work place, in a few *maquis*,[41] at the former food distribution centre when events where hold there, at my house, at celebrations (wedding, Korité – end of Ramadan, Mali independence, Burkina's revolution anniversary, women's day, and so on) in different neighbourhoods. I saw my various research participants between one and 32 times.

41. *Maquis* is a French word used in Burkina Faso to design a very *populaire* type of bar/restaurant, where one can drink, eat some 'basic' dishes and at times listen to music and dance.

There were only two refugee households in which I only went one time. This is because at the end of our first meeting[42] I could feel they were not comfortable with my presence, or did not express the desire to meet me again. I did not insist. The two I saw more than 30 times were Betty and Assadeck (and members of their households), who became close friends.

I had 176 interactions (with members of 24 different households, one association, 11 humanitarian workers of various levels, and two government officials) that I deemed useful for this project. By this I mean that of the hundreds of pages of my fieldwork diary (including all the notes from 'hanging out', interviews, and observations) there were 176 distinct instances, which can correspond to one whole day or one short discussion, that 'made it' to the coded material I examined and eventually became the analytical core of this thesis. Of course, all the other interactions and instances that did not 'make it' provided crucial context for the analysis and interpretations. I analysed my data with the help of NVivo (for the first round of coding and the organisation of the material) and, if a definition is needed, I followed what can be described as a grounded theory and interpretative anthropology approach (Glaser and Strauss 1967; Geertz 1983) to make sense of my data. This data is not only made up of notes of discussions and descriptions of scenes; it also includes smells, tastes, random thoughts, frustrations, joys, memories, and emotions: all constitutive elements of ethnographic research and participant observation.

Russell (1994) describes participant observation simply as “getting close to people and making them feel comfortable enough with your presence so that you can observe and record information about their lives” (342). It is important nonetheless to acknowledge and stress that as researchers we will have an impact on the context we

42. In the first meeting I would usually introduce myself and my research and ask some general information about them.

are immersed in, so even if our interlocutors 'feel comfortable' with our presence, we need to be aware of the influence our presence has, especially when we are not doing research 'at home'. As noted previously, I mostly relied on 'hanging out', which is a highly informal tool within participant observation, as it felt the most 'natural' and insightful. Additionally, with the interlocutors that one sees regularly, friendships develop, and 'hanging out' is what one automatically does in these contexts. Except that I was mostly hanging out with a small notebook at close distance. 'Hanging out' included a vast array of activities I did with my interlocutors/friends: simple chatting, resting on the couch or carpet while watching TV, sharing many teas, going to pick up kids from school, attending events and meetings together (like associative meetings and weddings), eating, cooking, going out, and so on. I do firmly believe that much precious information can be gathered in informal (in contrast to highly research-structured) settings and contexts. Yet, this does not mean that this method is not 'serious', on the contrary, it is because we build relations and gain trust with our interlocutors that we will able to access and discover things not visible on the surface or via other research methods.

I therefore understand ethnographic research as a physical and emotional immersion of the researcher in her field. The most important thing – and the hardest one to 'handle' – is human relations. Personal engagement in the relations with our informants and with our fieldsite(s) is what makes the information and data we collect reliable (Monsutti 2005a, 49). “Only repeated encounters, in space and time, allow building meaningful relations that become a privileged source of, simultaneously, information and emotions” (Monsutti 2005a, 49). Why and how I enter these relations is therefore a matter of great importance, and I now turn to disclosing and discussing my position in the field and beyond it.

A VISIBLE AND MOSTLY PRIVILEGED BODY

Knowledge is situated, partial, and unfinished – and the same goes for this thesis. I am a female, Swiss, white, unmarried student based at an internationally renowned university.[43] All this, together with my intellectual backgrounds and personal experiences shape my research: my presumptions and questions, my approach to the field, my access to the field, the ways in which I am perceived by my interlocutors in the field and the power dynamics between us. This, in turn, influences the data I found, what I was allowed to see and witness by the various actors, and how I analysed the information I gathered.

My visible features – being a white woman – and the non-visible but frequently asked and revealed ones – not married, student-researcher at a prestigious university – played a significant role in accessing my interlocutors, mostly in positive ways. With staff at UNHCR and WFP in particular, and especially the more senior and international ones, coming from the Oxford Refugee Studies Centre meant that they felt they had to 'let me in'. I felt some hostility when talking on the phone and scheduling meetings to some of them, as if they were suspicious of a potentially annoying researcher who most likely ends up critiquing their work. When we eventually met face to face, some of that hostility faded: I do look much younger than I am, and as such it is possible I look less threatening. In addition, being a woman also helped.

Interestingly, my characteristics helped me the most with refugee participants. Firstly, being white and single, meant that some gender dynamics and norms where eased in the relations with male interlocutors. If I were married and/or local, I could

43. Though the latter point only applied to facilitating my access to UNHCR and WFP – for my other interlocutors this did not made a difference: only one Malian refugee had heard of it.

not have had discussions on my own with both married and unmarried men. Equally if I had, that would have been badly perceived and, importantly, would have meant no access to the women's circles. During my previous research in the camp of Sag-Nioniongo in Burkina Faso, I was explicitly told by my male interlocutors how my bodily characteristics helped me: "Because Nora, let's be honest, if you were a boy, and not a young, white and beautiful girl, we would not be all so nice and available to work with you" (Bardelli 2015, 24). I had a privileged body for doing my research.[44] Of course, with male interlocutors this could quickly tilt to the other side: I had various seemingly serious marriage proposals and invitations to private spaces and interactions that I was not interested in. Luckily, this never actualised into harassment. Being a woman also opened doors to spend time with women of all ages. The majority, even if slightly, of my interlocutors were indeed women. I certainly felt more at ease with them, and with some I developed deep trust and friendships.

The most important aspect in facilitating my access though, was my whiteness. This is for two main reasons. Firstly, I was often associated with humanitarian workers and expats, and so refugees hoped that I could help them/support their causes and change the imminent cut in food and assistance. Secondly, because of the colonial and postcolonial history of Burkina Faso and its problematic legacies, as Betty told me, "hanging out with a white person is prestigious." This, of course, made me and makes me feel uncomfortable, but beyond acknowledging, there is not much I can do to address or shift this dynamic. I like to think that with my closest interlocutors, who are actually also friends, we moved beyond both of these aspects. Yet, if we did not, then this is also fine. We as researchers have most of the power in the 'anthropological encounter,' but our interlocutors are not powerless, and this is one

44. Even if this means always being visible and thus not being allowed to know what would actually happen without my presence, and easily attracting – at times unwanted – attention.

of the instances in which they can rely on it, by somehow 'using' us. I am getting a doctorate out of our shared time, if they get some 'prestige' with a neighbour, as Betty phrases it, I am happy.

Concerning the confusion on my role, it is quite a common concern with white researchers working in sub-Saharan Africa. In my research in 2013 I was initially taken for a journalist, as journalists were the only white people that refugees would see from time to time in the camp. The humanitarians working daily in the camp were locals, not expatriates, and I thus quite clearly was not one of them. This time around, because the refugees were scattered in the city, there was less media interest. Therefore a lack of interaction with journalists meant people thought I was a humanitarian, associated with UNHCR or WFP. Most of my interlocutors informed me that they had previously met another white researcher, a consultant coordinating a survey for UNHCR, although only the one time. This association influenced what I was told during my first meetings with the refugees and I analyse this in Chapter 6. Eventually, with repeated visits, no change in the level of assistance and long chats, my interlocutors accepted that I was not a humanitarian worker. Nonetheless, some of my interlocutors would at times ask me if I had heard any news regarding, for example, the promised additional aid that was supposed to follow the end of food and cash assistance, or about organised repatriation. As I am a foreigner and white,[45] I was deemed to have more information than they themselves did concerning issues that related to their own lives. This was also due to a significant and worrying lack of communication from UNHCR to urban refugees.[46] Additionally, my interlocutors

45. When I was asked about these issues, it was almost all the time in relation to UNHCR and WFP, where my interlocutors know expatriates work – I was usually not questioned about decisions, measures, or programmes carried out by CONAREF and CREDO, where only locals were working.
46. Interestingly, while I was discussing with a senior member of staff at UNHCR, the person told me "you should tell the refugees that this is the reason for…" (14/04/2016), referring to why they cut food

also knew that when I would go to Ouagadougou – on a few occasions while based in Bobo-Dioulasso – I would meet with senior officials of UNHCR and WFP, and thus before those trips they would make sure I took note of their refugeehood-related concerns, so that I could share those with them. “They don't listen to us, maybe they will to you,” Ongoïba told me in April 2016.

This transpired to be true, with UNHCR and WFP both 'happy' to meet me, but never met face to face, except in large meetings, with the refugees. This is one of the many power imbalances when one works with forced migrants. This brings me to the next point I want to discuss in this methodology chapter: all things ethics.

RESEARCH ETHICS

> “Ethical questions indeed arise at all levels of the research process […]. They arise in the relationship between the research and the social context, as well as between researchers and the researched communities, all of whom inhabit bodies that are perceived, received, and related to in ways that convey histories and historical relations. Perhaps the best we can do is become more conscious of the ways in which our identities, who we are, influence what we do and how we do it, so as to make more informed ethical choices – about the good and bad of what we do” (Mama 2007, 7).

My biggest ethical concern and challenge comes from my position of privilege in relation to my interlocutors. This privilege plays out at and comes from various levels

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and cash assistance. The refugees told me things to ask/say to UNHCR, and UNHCR did the same the other way around.

of my positionality and materialises in various ways: feeling guilty for 'using' my research participants and not being able to 'repay' them in any significant way in comparison to what they gave to me; being aware that my work will never have more than a marginal practical and policy impact; realising that I can enter and exit the 'field' as I please; knowing that I speak from a very privileged institution in terms of knowledge production; accepting that I have a privileged body and life; and recognising that I decide who's stories and voices, of all those I was gifted with, I share and which ones I ultimately ignore.[47] A concern for ethics also means not reifying certain representations and constructions of Otherness that objectify individuals into stereotypical, patronising, patriarchal, colonialist images. Most of the time, I am the powerful one in the anthropological encounter. Of course, as Enria (2018) says, this is not a sharp and definite separation; there are many greys in this scale – but I nonetheless must recognise these power differentials inherent in the anthropological encounter.[48]

To me, ethics is therefore a matter of not hurting my interlocutors, in any possible way, but also, and importantly, 'humanity' in a more general sense. This refers to what is found in official ethical guidelines[49] as part of the 'do no harm' principle, which should guide all research with 'human subjects'. But it is also larger: ethics in relation to anthropological research and knowledge production is both practical, in how we act, but also more theoretically, in how we think and, importantly, write.

47. While I say this, I also want to stress that I do think having to chose some voices over others, is better than ignoring all. Indeed, I am laying bare what I think are some of the main issues of our discipline, and the power dynamics characterising it, but I am not suggesting we should stop doing what we do. As Scheper-Hughes says, "[s]eeing, listening, touching, recording can be, if done with care and sensitivity, acts of solidarity. Above all, they are the work of recognition. Not to look, not to touch, not to record can be the hostile act, an act of indifference and of turning away" (1995, 418).
48. Crapanzano links similar ideas with what he sees as the inherent 'violation' that fieldwork entails, as we are uninvited guests, at least at first (2010, 57).
49. Such as the American Anthropological Association Code of Ethics (AAA 2012), or the Ethical Guidelines of the Refugee Studies Centre (RSC 2007).

DO NO HARM

A main concern in pondering the risks resulting from our research, writing, and publishing relates to making sure our interlocutors give their consent to being participants in our research and that we guarantee their anonymity and confidentiality. In regard to maintaining the latter, some of my interlocutors would not see the point, and told me I could cite them or tell their stories with their names. I explained to them why I would not do that and I tried, especially for those who's stories I share in more details (Fatoumata, Assadeck, Diko), to anonimise them as much as possible. They would obviously recognise themselves in the thesis. Not least because I asked my main interlocutors to pick their names for the thesis, so that the day I will go to see them with my tome and read some extracts – as many are illiterate, and none speak English – they will immediately recognise themselves. Nevertheless, I tried to leave out details that would make them too recognisable. While I am aware that the humanitarian context in Burkina Faso is small, I am also aware that not many people, if any, on the ground will actually read this.[50]

Regarding consent, I was always open and honest about what I was doing – my research, how long I would be there for, what I was expecting from it, what I could do for and with my interlocutors, and what I *could not* do for them. I made sure every person I met and that I included in my research understood this. Yet as I said before, even though I made very clear I was not a humanitarian and could not help them with issues related to assistance, I was still taken for one in the first months. Similarly, "it

50. I know this is not an excuse to rigorous anonymisation, but I also know that except Fatoumata's story, all the other actors I mention could not be discerned by the others living similar experiences and circumstances as not enough details were given – for this specific purpose. A few refugees in Bobo-Dioulasso and a few of her close friends may recognise Fatoumata if they were to read her story. I discussed this with her in December 2017, but she agreed that the chances that the very few people who know enough details of her private life to recognise her would read my work are minimal, and even if they do, "they know my story already so it won't make a difference" (13/12/2017).

is not ultimately possible to control people's hope" (Enria 2015, 37). Where possible I tried to make myself available for helping my interlocutors in various ways, as they were giving me so much of their time, energy, and space: teaching English to the daughters of a main participant, buying tea, rice, sugar and other supplies for the participants who hosted me regularly, helping setting up celebrations, driving around interlocutors on my motorcycle when it was needed and they had no means of their own, typing documents, proof-reading documents, or buying medicaments. I also made sure to keep reminding my interlocutors that I was doing a study and asked them again and again if I could take notes and write about what was being discussed. This is similar to what has been called an iterative consent process (Mackenzie et al. 2007).

When 'deep hanging out' is one's research method, one eventually becomes both a researcher and friend: a particular challenge with time passing by was being able to differentiate when I was doing research and when I was just spending time with friends. By this I mean that there were situations in which honouring trust, friendship, and personal relations was prioritized over research interests. This is particularly so in relation to information disclosed to me that could potentially 'hurt' my interlocutors as a whole, depending on how professionals reading this may interpret it. In this regard, I felt a small feeling of betrayal when I shared my preliminary results and observations with UNHCR at the end of fieldwork. I explained to them how some of the refugees felt that the refugee card was providing them with protection, a sort of shield that proved their innocence and distance from terrorists from Mali (more on this is in Chapter 5). I shared this information as I wanted to highlight how some of them did feel they could be targeted because of their origin (being Tuareg and light-skinned) by other locals or army/police. The reaction from a senior staff member was:

“we need to make sure they don't go around acting badly and then hiding behind the status then, we should do more regular and routine checks on them” (13/07/2016). He added that they should have 'checked' and re-validate their status earlier the year, but did not have time, but now they really needed to do it to make sure that only 'real refugees' were registered and possessing the status. Increasing the controls on refugees was certainly the last intention I had when sharing that piece of information. I wanted to sensitise them about fears some of the refugees experienced because of their origins.[51] Similarly, personal experiences, stories, or sentiments that were shared in friendship moments are not part of my study (and were certainly not shared with UNHCR) unless I explicitly asked for consent when I deemed the moment and story important enough to be included.

These are the main ethical issues I tackled and considered in my research. Yet not all of what I hold as ethical concerns and 'rules' are covered by guidelines or are explicitly discussed in scholarly research contexts.

THE POWER DIFFERENTIAL OF THE ANTHROPOLOGICAL ENCOUNTER

As anthropologists and researchers, it is our duty to try and reduce as much as possible the power differentials and unbalanced interactions which intrinsically make up the relations we create with our interlocutors. There are many scales and directions in which these dynamics play out, even if I argue that it is mostly the researcher who

51. These kinds of misunderstandings between anthropologists or experts on a topic/context/group and others are part of the reasons why at times we overlook some of the information we gather, or 'intimate knowledge' we have about our topics of expertise, depending on who sees this knowledge production. Shryock (2004) importantly reflects upon why he omits certain information about his knowledge of interlocutors and contexts he has been working with/on for a very long time. In his case, this was in relation to his interactions with journalists, post 9/11, interested on the subject of Arab-Americans. He would pass on contacts of 'moderate' interlocutors and friends, yet would not share stories that his interlocutors told him and could be misinterpreted and reinforcing stereotypical ideas of 'Muslims'. This is a different 'concealing' than the one contested by Scheper-Hughes (1995), who calls for an engaged and militant anthropology.

is the 'powerful' and privileged one. There are two aspects of this power differential that we should be aware of and recognise and that relate to ethical matters. First, reflections around what our role is as researchers, and secondly to why we are – or feel – entitled to do what we do.[52]

First, we decide to whom we give a voice. We spend hours chatting with many people, who agree to share their time with us, and eventually we select a few of them, with only part of the information they gave us used as supporting statements and stories to our arguments. In this thesis, I picked Fatoumata, Diko, Assadeck and a few others. But so many more told me about their lives, allowed me to spend time at their places and awkwardly follow them around the neighbourhood. I eventually decide whose story counts for my story. This will not change, we can mitigate it, try to 'give back', acknowledge all of our interlocutors, discuss with them what parts of their experiences we will share and why, but there will always be a power unbalance and we cannot pretend otherwise. Of course, my interlocutors are not powerless, they can decide not to engage with me, not to become my interlocutors, or tell me not to write what I am witnessing or what they tell me.[53] Life is far more nuanced than a binary understanding of me being the powerful and them being the powerless. When possible, I tried to prioritise "power sharing and addressing the sorts of questions" that my interlocutors wanted to have answered (Ticktin 2011, 228). Yet, in the end, I hold the power of recounting their stories, and thus I also do what I question in my work, meaning I do differentiate between them.

52. Another important issue in relation to this, but that for reasons of space I cannot develop fully, is the dilemma about what to call my interlocutors: informants, research participants, or friends. I would like to call them friends, especially my main ones as they really are friends now; yet calling them friends simultaneously sounds a bit disingenuous in this specific setting, in that it 'hides' the power differentials I discuss in this section; no matter how we want the relationship to be equal, it never will be. When I am physically with them and I introduce them to people in Bobo-Dioulasso, I do call them my friends, as that is who they are. But again, here, on paper, it feels hypocritical.

53. See Enria 2018 for a discussion about these nuanced and changing power dynamics and experiences of fragility.

The other level at which the differential will always be there, comes to light especially when doing research in a country which is not our own, and even more so when you are a white European doing research in a place like Burkina Faso, with a colonial past, the ongoing consequences of that, coupled with extreme poverty and inequality. In addition to the privileges more directly linked with accessing my research field that I discussed, there are also economic privileges, which are intrinsically linked with a whole other array of privileges; I was confronted with these very clearly in my fieldwork.

Socio-economic inequalities and the injustices that follow them at both the local and global level have never appeared clearer to me than in the face of illness. I got malaria after barely a month in Burkina Faso; my doctor in Switzerland and myself knew this was likely to happen, as I was staying for a year in a country with an extremely high prevalence of infection while taking anti-malaria pills for that type of duration is not advised. The 'positive' side of that inevitability is/was that malaria is more easily diagnosed and treated in Burkina Faso, much more so than in Europe where doctors would not necessarily understand right away what the issue was. In addition to my Burkinabè friends who regularly get malaria, I knew many foreigners who contracted it, got the treatment, and after a few very bad days, went back to everyday life. Until autumn 2015 I was convinced, just as my doctor, my colleagues and friends who regularly travel to malaria infected areas, and even many of my Burkinabè friends, that you die of malaria only if you do not have the money to get tested or to buy the treatment, or if you live too far from a village or city with a pharmacy. However, people can die of malaria even if they have money, if you are unlucky and end up buying a fake or substandard treatment and then do not have the funds to buy a second one or you realise too late the first treatment did not work.

I survived relatively unscathed because I am Swiss and because in Burkina Faso a living allowance of a European PhD student makes you a well-off person. As I said, I contracted malaria shortly after arriving in Burkina Faso. I went to the best clinic in town to get tested and I was prescribed a treatment that I bought in their pharmacy. It was the same clinic, the same pharmacy, and the same drug that my housemate went to and took two weeks earlier, when he got ill. Yet, after three days, I was still sick, the fever still reaching 40 degrees and losing conscience was becoming more regular. My housemates took me back to the clinic, where a blood test revealed that the infection had grown exponentially and had become cerebral malaria. I was immediately placed under intravenous quinine, and we waited. I do not remember much of the first and second day in the clinic, just that talking was getting harder, and I was not able to answer to my parents' text messages, as I had lost the ability to write. Of the third day, I have very few and vague recollections; I was unconscious most of the day. The following day the cerebral infection started to calm down, even though the list of related complications kept growing – I know this because I do remember when a doctor and a nurse from Rega came to 'pick me up.' Rega is a non-profit air-ambulance service we have in Switzerland. They have 18 helicopters and three jets, the former mostly operating in Swiss mountains and valleys, or moving seriously injured or ill patients to the relevant hospital as quickly as possible. The three jets offer intensive care units on board and pick up Swiss residents from anywhere in the world if they are severely ill or injured and cannot travel back through regular transportation. Membership costs around £22 per year (less if you have a family membership) and they cover all the costs of the operation; mine were around £55,000.

I knew the brain infection was improving because I remember the doctor and the nurse who came to get me. I do not remember much about getting to the airport and being put in the bed in the jet, but I remember the landing in Zurich, with a particular image of me laying on the bed with my head lower than my body, as we were landing, and I remember my parents and my brother waiting for me in the Rega hangar at Zurich airport. I then have vague souvenirs of the ambulance trip, but I remember that it took us – my father was with me and the doctors – a long time to get to the intensive care unit once out of the ambulance, and I somehow remember that they attached me to multiple machines when we arrived in my room. And then I fell asleep. I think I was feeling calm. What I do remember in every detail however is after a few days at the hospital, when my mum told me I had almost died and that when I landed in Zurich, the doctors did not know whether I would make it to the next day.

I survived because I had the money to go back to the clinic in Bobo-Dioulasso when the treatment did not work, because in Switzerland we have Rega, and I was urgently repatriated (it took less than 24 hours between the moment my housemates called my parents, who called Rega, and when I landed in Zurich) to my home country in a private jet. The jet in question, having an intensive care unit on board, a doctor, a nurse, two pilots, and a mechanic. All this then resulted in treatment in the ICU at the Zurich University hospital. I could have had severe permanent damage to various organs, my brain included, but I managed to go back to the field and now write this thesis comfortably sitting at a desk in Oxford, without too many difficulties. If I were a Burkinabè from the middle-upper class, I might still be alive, but I would almost certainly have had permanent damages to my kidneys, liver, and potentially my brain. I would have been able to go back to the clinic for a second

treatment, but even in the best clinic in town they would not have had the tools and equipment necessary to diagnose that some of my organs were failing. The second treatment though would at least have stopped the encephalitis. If I were a Burkinabè of lower socio-economic class, I would have died due to a lack of funds for a second treatment and the encephalitis would have surely taken over. Worst still, it is likely I would not had been able to afford the first treatment, whether fake or not, and would have died anyway.

Never before had my privilege been so blatantly brought to my attention. Never before I had felt so grateful to have been born in a middle-class family in Switzerland. Never before I had felt so guilty; it was a double-edged guilt that was very revealing of my role as an ethnographer, especially when being from a rich country and carrying out research in an underprivileged country. I felt guilty towards my parents (and my brother): they aged so much in the week when all this happened – before and after photos show the pain in their faces. How could I possibly be so selfish and just be like "I'm fine now, thanks, I'm going back"? They knew that was going to happen, because they knew me. But I did debate it for a while; whether it was worth it, whether making them anxious over me for another 9 months was a fair price for them to pay, for me getting a PhD out of this.

At the same time, when I was home debating when/if to go back, I felt guilty in relation to my extremely privileged position in this world, in being allowed to move freely in and out places according to where I felt safer. I also felt uncomfortable towards my interlocutors and friends in Burkina – how could I tell them "I'm sorry I'm not coming back, I almost died of malaria, which is something many of you risk, but my life is too precious to risk that again?" I do not wish the experience I have been through on anyone, but it made me reflect at so many levels and with much

intensity on my research, my role as a researcher, power dynamics and differential, the risks we can face and the privileges I own. The possibility for me to just leave (or be evacuated) is another characteristics of the power differential of the anthropological encounter. An extremely important reflection on similar dynamics comes from Luisa Enria (2018), who wrote:

> "Leaving is a product of my colour, of my class. So whilst feeling fragile and vulnerable has undoubtedly reshaped drastically how I engage with my research, the way I write about my research, and the way I relate to friends and research partners, it is key to avoid, in Patty Lather's words, the "liberal embrace of empathy that reduces otherness to sameness". Exploring fragility is challenging precisely because it forces us to look at ourselves fully and honestly, considering the ways in which we are weak and those in which we are strong, how we benefit and how we are hurt by injustice."

In my case, like my interlocutors, I was exposed to the global injustice that translates in inequality in access to and availability of health services, and particularly the industry of fake or substandard drugs that is a growing reality in West Africa.[54] Yet, I benefited from the global injustice and inequalities whereby Switzerland is one of the wealthiest countries in the world, as being from there and from a middle-class background meant I could be evacuated in a jet ambulance and treated in one of the best hospital and had almost no long-term effects. Enria goes on to argue that it is precisely by reflecting about and thinking around these vulnerabilities and how they

54. According to a WHO report, which commissioned a study to the London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine (WHO 2017a) an estimated 116,000 (the average within a range of 64,000-158,000) malaria deaths in sub-Saharan Africa per year are due to anti-malarial drugs that do not work; in 2016 there were around 422,750 deaths total due to malaria in sub-Saharan Africa (WHO 2017b), which means that around ¼ of those were due to the use of fake or substandard medicines.

are different from those that our interlocutors experience, that we can "reject the separation of analysis and advocacy. This means thinking about how we reproduce injustice through our ethnographic practice but also how to use our first hand experience and what is often our privilege to describe and mobilise against it, collectively" (Enria 2018).[55]

WHAT 'RESEARCH' MEANS TO ME

> "We might choose to design engaged methodologies that set out to demystify, question, and perhaps challenge global hegemonies, or we might choose to remain disengaged and reject any such responsibility. This, I would argue, is an ethical choice" (Mama 2007, 7).

This is a piece of engaged work. Not in the sense given to it by Smith and Kleinman (2010, 171), who see it as such because we do ethnographic fieldwork and thus "we are always witnesses evoking the contested truths and troubled emotions of the local moral world with which we have become a part."[56] Rather, it is engaged because I believe we should, through our work, try to change things that we recognise as unfair and unjust. This does not just mean aiming at, in my case, providing a base for a fairer humanitarian programme in Burkina Faso. This also means calling out larger inequalities that academia and our work can reinforce and reproduce. I will

55. Similarly, the goal of the edited book *Emotions in the Field* (Davies and Spencer 2010) was to "investigate how certain emotions evoked during fieldwork can be used to inform how we understand the situations, people, communities, and interactions comprising the lifeworlds we enter" (1).
56. While this is also true, we do have a different understanding of 'engaged', mine being more political and ethical, and theirs being moral and emotional. To me, the latter are part of the former. My approach is in line with Scheper-Hughes' important work on the issue of 'militant anthropology' (1995).

discuss this aspect in the conclusion to this thesis, but I here want to address approaches and stances I follow, as these clearly shape my work.

This work is also characterised by a feminist sensitivity that underlay my analysis and the way I look at and act in the world. I am aware that men have written much of our scholarship, even if this is changing, and that men often cite men. This is not necessarily a conscious choice, but it is the most available one; for my part, I have actively tried to avoid this. I have also tried not to fall into the analytical trap of thinking and writing in a way that would increase 'Third World Difference', as Mohanty (1984, 335) defines it, and by not concealing, but rather bringing to light "the fundamental complexities and conflicts which characterize the lives of women of different classes, religions, cultures, races and castes in these countries." Yet I do write from a Western feminist position, meaning it is hard to suggest I am not reifying specific global power relations and hegemonies.

When possible, I refer to women academics and, while not necessarily straightforward, I have tried to include as many non-Western authors as possible (in terms of origin, as in terms of location of work/publication it has proven even harder), in line with a postcolonial approach and view. However, perhaps because of the topics I am working on (forced migration and refugee studies) or because of time constraints to do more extensive literature research, my bibliography is extremely Eurocentric and white.[57] This is important to me, as diversifying and decentring our sources of knowledge is an ethical stance towards trying to challenge some global

57. I am aware this is an easy excuse – I should have engaged much more deeply with African scholarship, as my study is in/on Africa. While this is a new scholarship to me, as my previous area of study was only just starting to diversify its curriculums, I did nevertheless try to widen my views. Mama (2007), talks about this unequal production of knowledge, a double one in the case of African women, and how very significantly "[m]ost of that which is received as knowledge about Africa is produced in the West" (2007, 4). Of course, my work just increases the amplitude of this.

hegemonies outside and inside academia.[58] I certainly failed at including more non-English literature, despite having the abilities to read academic work in three additional languages. I could have also tried to incorporate information and sources that are not accepted as conventional knowledge (meaning, written by academics in my field). One may argue that the exercise of a doctorate in Oxford is precisely to produce knowledge in a certain way and according to specific settings, and therefore being able to do that is part of the degree itself. But that would be an easy excuse for not supporting the needed and due change in this type of institution.

LIMITATIONS

Knowledge is partial and situated. Research, based on interactions, personal relations and interpretations is very partial, even in a context that I have known since 2006, visited yearly since 2013, and where I lived for over a year now. I would say I am familiar with Burkina Faso, and Malians living there, but this familiarity will never be complete.

> "I don't treat people's statements recorded in transcripts and notes as "true" in any simple sense. Our archive was the product of a particular type of encounter" (Li 2014, 28).

Just as *I* say that how I think is shaped by so many variables, the same is valid for my interlocutors. Naturally, without knowing 'everything', what I recount about them, their experiences, and their stories, is always going to be my interpretation of it. We did however discuss what I was thinking about writing in relation to them. During my

58. Other works pushed forward the discussions about the power and colonial dynamics inherent academia and knowledge production in anthropology, in particular see Tuhiwai Smith (1999) and Restrepo and Escobar (2005).

last visit, in December 2017, I sat down with my main interlocutors and told them "we need to talk about my thesis, I need to see if what I'm writing about you makes sense and if you support it." Most of them did not challenge me, but rather just wanted to catch up and hear news from my side and share their own news. "As long as you tell the truth we're fine." In this regard, I tried my best.

As Enria (2015, 35) writes, "[e]thnographic observations, the development of relationships with key informants and a commitment to engaging with local norms and frames of reference helped contextualise conversations." I thus also relied on secondary sources to understand the historical, political, and social context; moreover, I heavily relied on what a significant number of people have been telling me in these years.

There are then more practical – and undeniable – limitations to this kind of study. One feels that despite occasionally reaching saturation points, there is always so much more to learn, find out, ask and experience. Time constraint will always be one such limitation: scholarships for DPhil are restricted in time, and so are the trimesters we have to do our research and write.

If interpretation and contextual/cultural translation can be an issue, this is even more true when we cannot always understand everything that is being said. Most of my interlocutors, in addition to Dioula/Bambara, Songhai, Pulaar, Arabic, or Tamasheq, spoke French and therefore our interactions were in French. I had to rely on a translator only three times, and this was to interview the elderly, who spoke only Dioula. By the end of my fieldwork I could decently understand the topics of conversation in Dioula and what was being spoken about, but not enough to grasp all nuances. There are therefore some interactions, between my interlocutors, with their neighbours and other actors that I did not catch.

In order to better situate the stories, experiences, and knowledge studied here further context is needed. And it is to this that I turn next, but not before sharing one last quote from Scheper-Hughes (1995, 418): “If I did not believe that ethnography could be used as a tool of critical reflection and for human liberation, what kind of perverse cynicism would keep me returning again and again to disturb [their] waters…?”

3.

UNRAVELLING THE CONTEXTS

My work has explanatory ambitions larger than the specific context on which it is based; yet it cannot be understood without familiarization with that context. “A complex social phenomenon like humanitarian aid, and in this case refugee assistance, cannot be reified and analysed outside its context of intervention” (Fresia 2009, 22). In this chapter I lay bare the essential background knowledge to start situating my work in the broader contexts it touches upon – additional contextual information will be presented in the ethnographic chapters.

I focus particularly on the 'local' contexts: I start with a brief overview of the Malian crisis and history, then move to the practicalities of current humanitarian interventions in Burkina Faso. I conclude with highlighting part of the specificity, particularly in legal terms, of this migratory situation – Malian refugees in Burkina Faso. Of course, a more detailed historicization would be useful on a number of related issues. Including, UNHCR and the international law instruments supporting it, 'the refugee' figure, status, and definition, as well as displacements and mobilities in West Africa and the various responses to those – both institutionalised and not. Yet because of space restriction this is not possible in this dissertation.[59]

My choice of working with Malian refugees in Burkina Faso was a serendipitous one. During the first year of my Master's degree I had to decide on a topic for the thesis; I knew I wanted to look into the ways 'rules' work in a refugee camp and that ideally I wanted to carry out research in francophone West Africa. I had been to Burkina Faso for a 'cultural exchange' in 2006 and had since developed personal and

59. See Fresia 2009 for a study of another intervention of the refugee regime in West Africa, where broader contextualisation of UNHCR's work is provided. See also Loescher 2001 for a larger look into some of UNHCR's history.

intellectual interest in the region. Additionally, on a practical level, my French is better than my English and so I would be more at ease working in that language. I was aware that Burkina Faso had started hosting Malian refugees back in 2012 and I decided to investigate the possibility of carrying out research there. My previous supervisor put me in contact with UNHCR and eventually I was allowed to undertake research in Burkina Faso. As the decision to do a PhD matured while doing that first research, it seemed sensible to continue working in the same context, where I already had friends and contacts.

CONTESTED MALI: HISTORY, POLITICS, CONFLICTS

THE CONFLICT

The crisis that pushed Malians into Burkina as refugees is highly contested, ongoing, and a result of complex and long politico-historical-social dynamics. To be concise, the recent uprisings that made Malians flee started in January 2012 when clashes between the Malian army and the *Mouvement National de l'Azawad* (MNLA) erupted in the northern Mali towns of Menaka and Tessalit. The main goal of MNLA was to gain independence for the territories of North Mali, also called Azawad, and create a secular democratic republic. MNLA is a political movement, created in October 2011 but based on demands that go back to the colonisation and de-colonisation periods. MNLA was, and still is mostly, formed by individuals belonging to the 'noble castes' of Tuareg;[60] some of these groups were already asking for independence in 1957 from the French administrators. Furthermore, before 2012

60. Tuareg are also called Kel-Tamasheq, which means those who speak Tamasheq. Both terms are used by those belonging to these groups and works studying those groups (for examples of justifications/choices see Lecocq 2010; Gonzales 2015; Diallo 2018).

three other major uprisings had been defined as Tuareg rebellions and were centred around demands for autonomy or independence in the Northern part of the country.[61]

Following the clashes between the Malian army and MNLA in January 2012, the situation quickly became extremely complex and contested. Diallo (2018, 56) describes this as "confused ethnic conflicts. The confusion was made even worse by the emergence of several Salafist Jihadist factions obsessed with implementing sharia law." Indeed, other 'movements' such as Ansar Dine and groups linked with Al-Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb, joined the conflict over controlling cities and regions in northern Mali. These groups at first joined the MNLA in wanting an independent state, yet "rebels [MNLA] and *mujahideen* quickly fell to fighting one another. Within a short few months of the collapse of the Malian Armed Forces in April 2012, the MNLA lost control of virtually all of northern Mali to a military superior alliance of Ansar Dine, AQIM, and MUJAO" (Lecocq et al. 2013, 348).

In addition to the coup carried out by Malian officers in March 2012, and a MNLA unsuccessful declaration of independence of Azawad from Mali in April 2012, a series of other events of varying amplitude and intensity have taken place since then, with many still ongoing. The most significant ones in terms of broader geopolitical impacts and the potential securitisation of certain groups of individuals – and refugees too[62] – in the Sahel and in Burkina Faso, are the emergence of a number of Western-led security and counterterror interventions: the military intervention led by the French (started as intervention Serval in January 2013, and then expanded into Barkhane operation in 2014 – still led by the French, but with the added support of

61. These previous uprisings took place in 1962-64, 1990-95, and 2007-09 (Keenan 2012).
62. Notably those associated, because of ethnic and political belongings, with the non-state armed groups operating in the area; this is a timely and extremely important topic to look into, which I unfortunately could not do in this study from a securitisation perspective. I do somewhat touch upon it but from a different angle, that of refugees' experiences linked with their ethnic origins – particularly in Chapter 5 with Assadeck's story.

the G5 Sahel forces), the UN peace mission (MINUSMA) since 2013; and an increasing presence of USA military particularly in the last five years, but established in the area since the inception of the Pan-Sahel initiative (e.g. see Keenan 2008). However, the most significant events and changes for people living or residing in the area were/are an increase in terrorist attacks and general insecurity in all of the Sahel area;[63] a number of kidnappings of Westerners and locals; and a revival and escalation of tensions and killings between different ethnic groups in central Mali, and in some parts of neighbouring Niger and Burkina Faso.[64]

Finally, a worrying and mostly untold – or unheard – instability is found in northern Burkina Faso, where members of so-called jihadist groups are based, or hide after raids in Mali. Here schools are being looted and shut down, and public servants (doctors, nurses, and teachers) are refusing to work. Local news and Sahel-based journalists and activists are reporting of Malian and Burkinabè armies and/or police forces, in the northern areas of both countries, carrying out killings and raids against civilian populations (Le Cam 2018; HRW 2018) on the bases of suspect linkages – although never proved – with 'terrorists'.[65] In the last few years there has been both internal displacement in Burkina Faso, a new feature and a consequence of the crisis

63. To complicate the contextual picture further, the attacks carried out in Ouagadougou and the rest of Burkina Faso since early 2016, need to also be analysed in light of Burkinabè politics and history, and particularly the fall of Blaise Compaoré (his regime started with the assassination of Thomas Sankara in 1987 and ended with a popular resurrection), as noted by Richard Banégas (25/06/2018, personal conversation). See also Oumarou 2014 on the 'diplomatic niche' that the country represented under Compaoré's regime, and Saidou's analysis of it (interviewed in Grira 2016).

64. In the words of one of my interlocutors, "no one really knows anymore what's going on. It was the north, and now the centre, and we don't understand who's fighting who […]. Will it ever stop? Not sure…" (10/06/2016). These recent episodes of intense violence provoked new 'waves' of Malian refugees (and Burkinabè who had been living in Mali for decades) arriving in Burkina Faso. For example, more than 3,000 people arrived between February 2018 and April 2018 (UNHCR UK 2018).

65. Understanding the role of the army or other groups, including the 'self-vigilance' ones, becomes increasingly harder. Just as example, in central Mali, at the time of writing (July 2018), between 50 and 60 Fulani were killed between June 13 and June 23 2018, as reported by local and international news websites (such as sahelien.com and rfi.fr).

that started in Mali in 2012, and also onward movement from northern Burkina Faso into Mali.

I do not have the space here to develop and discuss Mali's recent history in details. There is no uncontested explanation for how this crisis started, how it escalated so quickly and how the number of separate groups involved grew. Yet there are a few points of agreement that are important to note, as they are relevant for what is discussed in parts of this dissertation.

The first one concerns the multiplication of implicated actors (and I am referring to non-state actors here), which originated from a mix of "the fall of Libyan President Gaddafi, of the influence of the international terrorist networks, and long-standing ethnic conflicts in northern Mali" (Diallo 2018, 56). According to Lecocq and colleagues, the participation of the Islamic groups in the recent Tuareg uprisings is most likely the differentiating feature of this conflict, in relation to previous rebellions: "[w]hile Tuareg nationalism has been a force in Saharan politics for decades, the rise of political Islam with a Salafist orientation is much more recent" (Lecocq et al. 2013, 349)." This shift needs to be situated, not only in Malian's long standing socio-political dynamics, but also in the emergence of 'global movements' like Al-Qaeda, and in the increasing tensions over control of land and resources in the north of Mali, which are themselves linked with the intensification of various forms of international smuggling – drugs, weapons, people – in the same region.[66]

A Songhai interlocutor told me how things unfolded in Timbuktu (27/06/2016), and many of these complicated dynamics are identifiable in his story. "At the beginning, we heard of people attacking others outside and getting ready to come into

66. For more details, see Lecocq 2010; Lecocq et al. 2013; Soares 2012; Claudot-Hawad 2013; Harmon 2014; Ba 2016.

the town." Those who could, started getting ready to leave before that, as he did too, due to the fact that one of his cousin worked for the Malian army and had told him it would be safer to leave the area before the conflict would start. When I asked who was going to come into town and take control, he explained that "some said jihadists, other said AQMI people,[67] and other again said MNLA. No one really knew." The only certainty they had was that whoever was planning to come and control the city had linkages with civilians in Timbuktu. "When you're in town at night you would see people in 4x4 coming in and buying food and stuff. I told myself that there was Malian complicity, of citizens themselves. There must had been families hosting them during the day, and then they would only go out at night to do their things and get ready." He continued expressing his fear and conviction that the crisis would continue, unlike previous ones which ended relatively quickly. "Before there were the helicopters that would come towards Timbuktu and other areas in the north that were brining cocaine, there was a lot of smuggling happening. The youngster would go there, they give you a car, and if you get to destination you gain the car and money. The drugs need to be transported across the border, like to Algeria and Mauritania." To him, this was the cause of the current crisis. "When they wanted to stop the dealing, it was the time of ATT [Amadou Toumani Touré]. He was giving something to the rebels, to stay calm. ATT could have controlled the situation, he wanted to negotiate with the dealers and the groups, but the population didn't want this. We were against this smuggling." He said that the official position of the government was also against this, but he was convinced – and he is not the only one – that "there were too many in the government that were eating out of that. Before the French came, many were officially arrested for smuggling, but until this day no one has been

67. Al-Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb.

judged for it. Of course the government was involved." Another factor that this informant mentioned as being key in trying to make sense of this conflict, "is that we're racist. There's too much racism where we come from. You see us together, but at the bottom of our hearts we don't like each other. […] The light skinned, even if once they greeted you, once they get to you and you're black they blow you up."

What I want to convey with my interlocutor's explanation of how the current crisis started, is the complexity of the situation and the many dynamics and histories playing their part, making it impossible to come to a univocal understanding or explanation of its origins. Recent events and realities, like the presence of jihadist groups in the north of the country, get entangled with numerous issues such as well-known trading in the region, struggles around territorial control, consequences and repercussions from colonialism and decolonisation, geopolitical games, and so much more. All this complexity is reflected in the seemingly impossibility for this crisis to end and feeds into different narratives supporting different 'solutions'. A constant presence in the region though are the tensions that regularly arise between the different groups living in Mali.

GROUP TENSIONS

The racism my interlocutor was referring to in the previous section, can be related to the long-standing ethnic conflicts that Diallo mentions and I cited above. This 'conflict' is a key theme that runs through Malian politics, history, and societies. Ethnic tensions have been studied extensively in relation to the distinction between sedentary and pastoralist groups, and more specifically around and within the Tuareg groups and the division between south and north of the country. Indeed, the previous

crisis linked with northern Mali had been defined as Tuareg rebellions. In particular the ones in 2006 and 2009 were "largely grounded in tensions internal to Tuareg society" (Lecocq et al. 2013, 345). As I said, the current conflict and crisis is not only specifically linked with the tensions between the various groups living in Mali, yet tensions between Tuareg and other groups, and importantly within Tuareg societies, are certainly key in any analysis of what is happening.

Originally, Tuareg groups were nomads who practiced pastoralism[68] and commerce in the central Sahara, an area that today is separated in to six states: Algeria, Burkina Faso, Libya, Mali, Mauritania, and Niger; estimates suggest that there are currently between 1.5 million and 3 million Tuareg in the region. Lecocq (2010, 4) explains how Tuareg organisations are based on hierarchy (castes) and clan, "which can be seen as quasi kin groups based on a lineage ideology, which varies per clan." Yet, "[t]he very notions of hierarchy and even the mere existence of castes and *tewsiten* [clans] are controversial subjects of debate within Tamasheq society as well as among scholars" (Ibid.). For this reason, I will not get into details regarding Tuareg groups and societies, castes and clans, or distinctions between freemen, nobles, and slaves.[69] When I qualify individuals as 'noble Tuareg' in this dissertation, it means I am referring to Tuareg coming from sub-groups, or castes and clans that have historically been higher up in the hierarchy, think of themselves as nobles and are generally of

68. Some still live according to pastoralist norms and practices, yet as Randall and Giuffirda (2006, 431) stressed, "there have always been people, households and communities dropping in and out of pastoralism and mobility." Therefore, even defining Tuareg groups as pastoralists or nomads is an overgeneralisation. For more detail on the ways Kel-Tamasheq groups live and how these changed in time, see Lecocq 2010 and Aime 1999.

69. There are many works dedicated to this and related subjects; for example see Olivier de Sardan 1984, Salifou 1993; Lecocq 2010; Grémont 2012; Diallo 2018.

lighter skin colour. Assadeck, who's story I discuss in Chapter 5, told me that "we Tuareg have different races, different qualities if you want" (22/10/2015).[70]

Tuareg are one of the many groups, commonly labelled as ethnic groups, present in Mali (though equally as a 'group', they are also divisible into many more sub-groups). Other main groups include Bambara (the majority in the south), Songhai, Fulani, Arab, Dogon, Bozo, Arma and Bobo. Among Malian groups, Tuareg are often discussed, usually in romanticised terms ('the blue men from the desert') or negative terms – this linked to their 'caste system' and the importance that slaves (the 'Bellah question'[71]) had in their societies. Tuareg indeed have a much discussed and debated social and political organisation, more precisely organisation*s*, as there is a significant temporal and spatial diversity in their structure (Lecocq 2010, 3; Rossi 2010, 89), with the only common denominator agreed upon being its hierarchical character. This

70. The question of how to approach the use of emic terms and categories – in this particular case, race – is at once an ethical and an analytical challenge, complicated by the centrality of these social structures to the lives and experiences of my interlocutors. Indeed, the risk of reifying categories and structures that legitimise power asymmetries, inequalities, and discriminations by using them in our academic work is not to be underestimated, as I highlighted in the 'Ethics' section of the previous chapter (though it can be argued that ignoring or silencing 'race' or other similar categories is just as dangerous in terms of reifying such asymmetries and structures of oppression; for a stimulating read see Da Silva 2007). I have yet to find a solution to this particular dilemma. In this dissertation I thus use the term 'race' and some of its common qualifiers (light-skin, black, etc.) for various reasons, one being that intersectional analysis (e.g. Collins 2000) sees 'race' as a necessary lens through which to understand cumulative inequalities and lived experiences of many groups; it can therefore be analytically useful to explain those inequalities and experiences. Secondly, I am using the term 'race' and the categorizations it indexes as the term was used by my interlocutors when explaining to me who belongs to which ethnic group, and the historical and contemporary tensions and power asymmetries among these groups. As I will discuss further in this thesis, those tensions and asymmetries are often based on skin-color differences and stereotyped ideas of those differences – clearly these usages are not monolithic, rather 'race' (and how it is experienced) flexes in meanings and usages across groups and individuals, as well as across time and space. Indeed, social differences coded as and indexed by the term 'race' highlighted between the various ethnic groups in Mali and the Sahara/Sahel region at large have a major influence on the interactions between these groups, yet, as with any social category, the importance lent to racial configurations in Mali and Burkina Faso as well fluctuates across individuals and groups. Finally, studies of the Malian context also often use the term itself, and it is given an important analytical role in the understanding of historical, social, and political frictions and divisions characterising that area as far back as pre-colonial era (see for example Lecocq 2010 and Diallo 2018).

71. This was a chief concern and base of judgment for humanitarians that worked with Malian refugees in the camp of Sag-Nioniongo, where I did my research in 2013 and 2014. 'Bellah' is a pejorative term used to describe people from the lower caste/class in Tuareg societies, and literally means 'slave' in Songhai; it is widely used by Tuareg, non-Tuareg Burkinabè and Malians, humanitarians working in Burkina Faso with Malian refugees (Bardelli 2015), and people of 'Bellah origin' themselves – like Diko, mentioned in Chapter 4.

hierarchy is much more complex than the more common seen three castes division of nobles, craftsmen, and bellah/slaves. A previous interlocutor of mine, a Tuareg, when we were discussing these hierarchical structures, told me that "it would take a month for me to explain well to you. I'm not even sure I know all the differences and divisions and clans" (July 2013).

It is therefore not possible to describe what being part of these groups means today, as Lecocq underlines in his work (2010) and my interlocutor's comment suggests. Importantly though, even if slavery has ceased to formally and officially exist, today's socio-political Tuareg organisations are undeniably still influenced by those hierarchical structures.[72] I observed this clearly during both my first research project with Malian refugees and the current fieldwork. Additionally, I talked at length about these issues with Betty, one of my main interlocutors, who told me repeatedly how "there's a lot of racism in our families" – she is very sensitive to the issue, as she is of a light skinned group but is now married with someone pejoratively considered as a black man by her family. More generally, these hierarchies and the tensions linked to this were particularly visible to me when 1) Tuareg of different groups were talking about each other; 2) light-skinned Tuareg talked about non-Tuareg and non-light skinned people; and 3) non-Tuareg talked about noble/light skinned Tuareg. When these distinctions surfaced, they were mostly in negative and pejorative terms and based on differences in skin colour.

The authors I have cited so far in this section also stress how the particular social strata system of Tuareg groups plays a role in the perceptions and discourses about them – which often culminates in highly stereotyped images: "at its most colourful

72. As Hureiki (2003, 86) points out, the interpretation of Tuareg castes is linked with the ideology from which we come. Similarly, Rossi (2010, 98) argues that the debates on whether there still is 'slavery' today give a different answer according to the intellectual position of scholars.

and with the broadest of strokes: the Kel-Tamasheq were thought of as white, feudal, racist, proslavery, bellicose and lazy savage nomads" (Lecocq 2010, 75). This of course is not a unilateral process; the hierarchical structures also influence the way Tuareg themselves look at other groups, organisations and societies. Lecocq argues that Tuareg political elite (mostly free, white, noble Tuareg) perceived and perceives populations of the South of Mali "as an overwhelming mass of religiously ignorant and uncivilised blacks, with whom they had nothing in common and with whom they either had nothing to do or who they had previously dominated" (76). Group and racial tensions were common features in many of my interlocutors' discourses and social, political, and historical analysis. This is influenced by the long historicity of the relations between the various groups in Mali (and particularly in the north), which in turn can play out at the level of personal experiences.

Seydou, a Songhai refugee coming from Gao, north of Mali, often expressed anger and hatred towards light-skinned Tuareg. He also acknowledged that "they are my brothers" – as they come from the same place – but it does not change the fact that to him "they steal and kill, they are combatants" (16/05/2016). During our first meetings, he seemed angry at those groups for starting the rebellion that made him flee his home in Gao and leave his parents behind ("they're too old to come" – 12/03/2016). Over time, it became clear that his anger towards them was anchored in his lived experiences of growing up in Gao and already living through two Tuareg rebellions. On one occasion, we were talking about his education and why he regretted not going to high school. While explaining why he stopped studying – I was expecting he would tell me it was because of financial reasons and the need to

support his family by working[73] – he told me that he was supposed to join the high-school where his aunt was teaching, but together with the school dean and the other professors, she was slaughtered by Tuareg rebels during the early 1990s insurgency. In addition to a long and debated historicity of inter-groups relations, there are therefore also personal experiences such as this one that played a role into my interlocutors' views of other groups and refugees.

Tuareg "have thus often been stereotyped by both Westerners and groups with whom they share territories and countries" (Bardelli 2015, 28) and in my previous work I also describe different instances in which both humanitarian workers (local and expatriates alike), as well as Burkinabè friends, tended to reproduce those stereotyped images. Yet I also encountered an opposing dynamics on various occasions hanging out with Tuareg since 2013, especially with those from elite and noble origins. The majority of which told me they would never marry a black woman (or men, though my women's interlocutors were less explicitly prejudiced). I will return to these dynamics through the story of Assadeck in Chapter 5.

To go back to the conflict that started in northern Mali in 2012, which produced the refugees that became my interlocutors since 2013, Lecocq et al. (2013, 344-346) suggest that the Tuareg social organisations and the internal and external related tensions most likely played a part in the current crisis. They see this as being particularly evident in the composition and opposition of the various groups – thus agreeing with the assertions made by Diallo (2018). Yet it is equally clear that complicated relations and dynamics between the various groups living in Mali are not

73. This was the most common reason my men interlocutors would recount when telling me why they stopped school or never started it. For the women, an important part of the Fulani, Songhai, and Tuareg ones coming from the north or centre of Mali, going to school – or French school, as they qualify the type of school is recognised as formal education – was never an option. The only accepted education they could have was the madrasa's one.

the only reason for the ongoing conflict; as mentioned, the return of two to three thousand Tuareg fighters who served in Gaddafi's armies in Libya forms part of the broader picture (Keenan 2012).[74]

In addition, the former government guided by ATT and then overthrown by the army also needs to be considered. Particularly its role in (not) dealing with the north of the country; as ATT noted, independently of one's belonging to a specific group, living and growing up in the north of the country can mean experiencing hardship and inequalities (especially compared to the south) that can lead to joining one or the other conflicting parties. "There are no streets, no health facilities, no schools, no water wells, no basic structures for everyday life. In fact, there is nothing. A youth from the north has no chances to get married or have a successful life, except if he steals a car and join the smugglers" (ATT, in Leymarie 2012). For one of my interlocutors this was the main factor that motivated the new rebellion: "we all know there are donations [from aid] that were given for the development of the north but that never reached the area. It was kept in the south instead" (27/05/2016).

This is a very simplified synopsis of the events that are behind the 'whys' Malians live as refugees in Burkina Faso today, some fleeing the conflict zones (thus coming principally from the North[75]) and some fleeing the intimidation experienced because of their Tuareg origins (in the South of the country, where they are the minority). At the beginning of my fieldwork there were around 32,000 Malian refugees living in

74. According to one of my interlocutors, in addition to the return from Libya of thousands of people and weapons, another significant factor was that an important number of people living in the north of Mali were dependent on remittances from family members who were working/fighting in Libya. Upon their return there were many more people who were struggling financially and would have agreed to any kind of job to secure an income – including joining the armed groups. He told me "many Tuareg in Libya were in the army and were used to live with ease, once they came back here they had weapons, nothing to do and a lower standard of life. What else to do if not take up the arms and ask for independence?" (17/05/2016). See also Ba (2016) for yet another interpretation of the current crisis.
75. This is changing as what has been called 'intercommonal violence' and that I mentioned earlier, is now also part of everyday life in Mali, particularly in central Mali, with more people now leaving that area.

Burkina Faso; of those, 70% were in two refugee camps in the north of the country and the remaining 30% lived outside the camps, self-settled in either urban or rural areas. The majority of the registered refugees in Burkina Faso are Tuareg (around 75%), the rest mostly being Songhai, Fulani, Arab speakers, and Dogon. In Bobo-Dioulasso the situation was slightly different. When I started fieldwork, the 'composition' was:[76]

Tuareg	431	40%		
Arab	111	10%	**TOT**	**1083**
Fulani	275	25%	Women	633
Songhai	97	9%	Men	450
Other	169	16%		

I now turn to the practicalities of the humanitarian intervention in Burkina Faso with Malian refugees, as recalled by various of my interlocutors, humanitarians and refugees.[77]

HUMANITARIAN INTERVENTION IN BURKINA FASO WITH MALIAN REFUGEES

When I refer to 'the refugee' in this work I do not have a clearly defined and unchanged/unchanging category in mind, the same goes for humanitarian intervention/assistance. I am focusing on one specific intervention, which is not the same as others that take place in other areas and times. The refugee regime operates in a variety of ways, in a variety of contexts, with a variety of meanings and goals,

76. UNHCR Data, from 31/10/2015; see also Appendix 1 for other socio-economic data at the time of my arrival.

77. Before describing how the humanitarian intervention unfolded in Burkina Faso, I wanted to clarify that as I worked only with Malian refugees in Bobo-Dioulasso, I mostly focus on this group and particularly on interventions with urban refugees. In Bobo-Dioulasso there are also 30 non-Malian refugees, coming from Burundi, Congo, Rwanda, and Chad. They have legal status, but did not receive any food and cash assistance, as they arrived in the 1990s or early 2000s.

meaning that the resulting humanitarian operations and spaces are very different (Fresia 2009, 21). Nonetheless, some of the tendencies that I present in the next few chapters are likely to share the same characteristics as other humanitarian spaces.

CONAREF and UNHCR have assisted and provided protection to Malian refugees since the 1990s, when the previous crisis in Mali produced significant numbers of refugees. After a peace agreement was signed in 1995, UNHCR and CONAREF organised programmes of repatriation in 1996 and 1997. During the crisis in the early 1990s the office of CONAREF was open and operational in Bobo-Dioulasso. It then closed, and re-opened in late 2012, when "the refugees were coming *en masse*" (13/10/2015, CONAREF officer[78]). UNHCR Burkina Faso remained operational after the 1990s crisis, but it was significantly downsized between the two Malian emergencies: at the end of 2011 Burkina Faso was hosting around 500 refugees from 11 countries, who arrived at different times, resulting in the UNHCR office only having three staff members.

When Malians arrived at the border and said that they were entering Burkina Faso as refugees they were quickly informed about their rights and duties, "so that once they'd get to Bobo it would be easier for them and us" (CONAREF officer, 13/10/2015). They would then go to the municipal stadium, as the CONAREF office was not operational yet, to get 'interviewed' and usually receive *prima facie* recognition.[79] After arriving in Bobo-Dioulasso at the beginning of 2012, refugees

78. The CONAREF official responsible for the office when I was doing fieldwork arrived at the end of 2013 and during our discussions he was not sure when the official re-opening of the bureau occured.
79. *Prima facie* refers to group determination of refugee status. According to Rutinwa (2002, 1) this "means in essence the recognition by a State of refugee status on the basis of the readily apparent, objective circumstance in the country of origin giving rise to exodus. Its purpose is to ensure admission to safety, protection from refoulement and basic humanitarian treatment to those patently in need of it." This mechanism is usually triggered by large-scale influx of displaced persons, and it is often used in the African context, via the adoption of the 1969 OAU Convention, which provides for a more nuanced and contextual definition of 'refugee' than the 1951 Convention. In Burkina Faso, *prima facie* recognition as a protection instrument is also included in the law 0.42 relating to the status of refugees.

either went to temporarily live with family members or acquaintances, or they went to the stadium, where a short-term 'camp' was set up. As that placement was far from ideal and clearly temporary, many refugees were moved a few months later to Sag-Nioniongo camp (close to Ouagadougou and were I previously did my research), which shut down in 2015. As the CONAREF officer recognised, not all refugees accepted this move, as those more used to the urban environment preferred to stay – even though they were aware that they would not get 'free accommodation' as they would in the camp.

In addition to the stadium, a number of Malians also stayed at one of my interlocutor's house in the first months of the crisis, before UNHCR and CONAREF started coordinating the assistance. Her husband was seen as one of the most powerful refugees in town, in terms of prestige, for his role in the community (he was a well-known *marabout*[80]), and for his connections – in both Mali and Burkina Faso. He was often travelling and rarely at home, but the few times he was in Bobo-Dioulasso, he appeared to attract seemingly important and definitely wealthy people. As an example, in one of my visit at their place, three 'big men' where there; I could not hear what they were discussing, but the tone seemed friendly and they clearly knew each other. When they left he told me that one was the commanding officer of the Bobo-Dioulasso squad of the Republican Security Company (CRS), a tactic and administrative branch of the national police, in charge of national security operations and law enforcement and restoration.[81] My interlocutors could not precisely remember how many people they hosted, but "it lasted for some months and 50kg of rice weren't enough for a week. And we killed a sheep almost every day" (Umu,

80. A *marabout* is a "Muslim mystic or religious specialist" (Lecocq 2010, xvi); one can recognise how powerful and respected a *marabout* is according to his wealth and notoriety.
81. http://www.police.gov.bf/index.php/a-votre-service/crs-unites, accessed 28/05/2018.

18/03/2016). One day, when people were still staying at their house, a commissioner of either CONAREF or UNHCR came by and brought pasta, sardines, and soap. The men all sat outside with the commissioner and his team discussing what was needed for refugees in Bobo-Dioulasso and how the refugees were going to be assisted, while the women sat inside chatting.

This happened in June or July 2012, when UNHCR and CONAREF officially started assisting urban refugees in Bobo-Dioulasso. Beforehand, the region of Houet, of which Bobo-Dioulasso is the capital, took charge of providing space and assistance to refugees. In February 2012 (the 4th, according to one of my interlocutors' memory) the Province committee for emergency and rehabilitation of the High Commissioner for Houet,[82] started supporting refugees with food assistance. None of my interlocutors could tell me with precision when UNHCR and CONAREF started taking charge of urban refugees in Bobo-Dioulasso, as the humanitarians I met during my fieldwork were not part of the agencies or not in charge of dealing with urban refugees in 2012. Once this operation started, the two agencies made a support/assistance plan concerning health, education, and food (I discuss these in more details particularly in Chapter 5). At first, food distribution and official meetings took place at the house of the interlocutors I mentioned. The municipality then gave a space to UNHCR to build a distribution and meeting centre, which is still used today, although only for meetings, as distributions of food do not occur anymore.

82. The regional branch of the Burkinabè ministerial institution that intervenes in various types of crisis. Also, part of the ministry formerly called 'Social action and national solidarity', which was the national agency also in charge of providing emergency relief for any crisis affected groups (since 2013, it joined the ministry of 'Promotion of women and gender'; it now is 'The Ministry of women, of national solidarity, and of the family').

In addition to UNHCR and CONAREF, a number of other organisations were involved in the humanitarian intervention in Bobo-Dioulasso. Below is a brief description of their different roles and their relationships to each other. Through these accounts, some of the paradoxes of today's refugee regime start emerging, as well as highlighting the growing distance between UNHCR and the daily lives of refugees.

ON DIFFERENT ROLES, OUTSOURCING, AND DISTANCE IN THE HUMANITARIAN SPACE

UNHCR

As the national representative explained to me (14/04/2016), UNHCR is in Burkina Faso to support CONAREF, which as the national agency has the authority to grant asylum. This support is firstly financial; UNHCR for instance pays for all the logistic supplies and salaries. UNHCR is also responsible for the protection of refugees: this translates to supporting CONAREF in making sure refugees have their required documentation to move freely and that they are provided with legal assistance when/if needed. The Agency also makes sure that WFP provides food and cash assistance to refugees and that the distribution of these goods goes smoothly. The national representative of UNHCR has regular (monthly) meetings with CONAREF and WFP. UNHCR has implementing partners to which it outsources (and thus finances for the most part) some elements of the implementation of refugee protection and assistance, such as schooling, health-care, water, sanitation, and non-food items (shelter) in camps, self-sufficiency programmes, and so on. The main role of the representative herself/himself is to advocate with other supranational agencies, NGOs, donors, and host states for funding and collaboration.

In Bobo-Dioulasso, UNHCR had a staff member present from early 2013 until end of 2014. From 2015, this staff member was called back to Ouagadougou and from there handled 'the Bobo situation', while also dealing with new tasks and missions. According to him, other staff members of UNHCR and CONAREF and the refugees themselves, the relationship between UNHCR and urban refugees started deteriorating after he left Bobo-Dioulasso. UNHCR staff members put this deterioration down to cuts in their funding and assistance, rather than simply a lack of physical presence of a staff member in Bobo-Dioulasso. The CONAREF officer and the refugees believed the deterioration was at least partly due to the diminished communication between UNHCR, the refugees, the CONAREF and partner organisations workers in situ.[83]

This is a brief overview of what UNHCR role is in Burkina Faso and particularly in Bobo-Dioulasso. Other details will be presented and discussed in the empirical chapters. In all my interviews since 2013 with UNHCR office-based workers about the Agency's role, I was repeatedly told that CONAREF, as representative of the Burkinabè government, has the final call on all matters. In contrast, all interviews and chats with fieldworkers, whether working for UNHCR or its partners (CONAREF, IEDA, CREDO, TDH, and the Red Cross) reported that UNHCR has the final word.

CONAREF

CONAREF's main role, after granting asylum, is ensuring the refugees have the legal protection demanded by the various legal instruments and that the refugees are aware of what this protection implies/means. The governmental agency work starts at

83. When I last visited Bobo-Dioulasso in December 2017, I was told that a UNHCR staff member was back working from Bobo-Dioulasso.

the borders. Since the beginning of the crisis in 2012, there are two principal 'doors' that refugees used (and use) to eventually arrive at their destination Bobo-Dioulasso, one in Koury and one in Benena. Members of the national police who are stationed in these border areas are informed about what to do and what to say to the refugees, as well as inform CONAREF when an asylum seeker arrives. Though the Malians would not necessarily stop at the border to ask for asylum, as they could also go straight to Bobo-Dioulasso and ask for the status once there.

CONAREF is also responsible for another arm of legal protection, namely the issuing of documentations for refugees, such as birth certificates for children born in Burkina Faso. The commission also provides IDs for refugees, which allows them to move around freely and, in theory, aid them in tasks such as opening a bank account. When the CONAREF officer was giving me this information, he said that not every bank recognizes the refugee card and at times he had to go there personally to explain. Nevertheless, he felt on the whole that the document was mostly useful for the refugees. CONAREF also assists in the recognition of marriages, because while in Mali a religious wedding counts as a legal one, in Burkina Faso it must be a civil marriage to be legally recognised.

The commission for refugees is also seen as the chief advocate for any administration or security matters refugees may face. As I will explain further down, while Malians in Burkina Faso have the same rights as Burkinabè, they are not always aware of this, and so this is another area in which CONAREF supports the refugees. The officer of the agency gave me the example of a refugee who went to pay for high school fees and was charged XOF30,000, when the regular fees (for Burkinabè and therefore Malians as well) was XOF15,000. He ultimately went to liaise with the school and made sure the refugee was reimbursed. CONAREF also pushes for 'peaceful cohabitation,' which in the current context mostly means educating the local population and army that not all Tuareg and light-skinned Malians are terrorists. The CONAREF officer himself went to the local radio and TV with the

aim of sensitising people about the fact that Tuareg refugees were just like regular people and they should not be stigmatised.

The national commission also takes care of issuing 'travel documents' for refugees. Malian refugees in Burkina Faso have freedom of movement, both within and outside the country. Yet in theory, every trip that a refugee undertakes should be notified to CONAREF in Bobo-Dioulasso, which is then passed to the office in Ouagadougou, so that “we know where they are.” A staff member in the capital checks the request and sends back a permit (which includes a photo of the person travelling) indicating its validity. In practice, most refugees bypass these steps, especially if they possess identity documents from Mali, as those allow them to travel freely within the ECOWAS states who are signatories of the freedom of movement treaties (ECOWAS 1979). The majority of my interlocutors told me that when they travel in Burkina Faso and outside of it, they normally would not make an official request, as they use their Malian documents if stopped at the border and outside the country, while they would show their refugee ID card if stopped within Burkina Faso. In addition, going through the official request took a long time.

CONAREF has also been the Agency in charge of liaising with the national police and the ministry of security of Burkina Faso. Following the recent and recurring terrorist attacks in Burkina Faso carried out by groups either composed of Malians, or linked with groups operating in Mali, CONAREF and the Burkinabè security forces held meetings to discuss how to prevent refugees, especially light skinned ones, being easy targets to army, police, and the public. After the meetings, if the national forces were about to raid or carry out checks at a Malian's house, they would firstly check with CONAREF to see if the person(s) in question was a registered refugee. When I was doing fieldwork, CONAREF and CREDO workers explained at length to the

refugees how they needed to inform them when family members or friends were visiting from Mali, “so that everything is transparent” (CREDO officer, 02/02/2016). This is demanded in the case something happens (terrorist attacks or terrorist-related arrests mainly) and it turns out that a refugee hosted one of the suspects. If the visitor was announced beforehand, CONAREF has a chance to protect the refugees against being immediately judged as terrorist too (in case the refugee is innocent) as she was clearly not hiding the person.

To conclude with CONAREF, the officer in charge of the Bobo-Dioulasso office when I was doing fieldwork was always open to talk and engage in discussion about the Commission's work. In addition, he was a person that all my interlocutors trusted and spoke highly of – contrary to staff members of UNHCR and CREDO of whom they were more critical. He made a difference for many refugees in Bobo-Dioulasso, at a time when it was deemed that UNHCR had 'abandoned them.'

CREDO

In addition to the governmental Agency and UNHCR, various NGOs also participate in the humanitarian assistance programmes in Burkina Faso. The main one in Bobo-Dioulasso is CREDO. CREDO supports UNHCR and CONAREF in the 'day-to-day' interactions with the refugees. In Bobo-Dioulasso the NGO did this in a variety of capacities, often changing even during the time of my fieldwork. Indeed, in the first few months I was there, IEDA was still operational and mostly in charge of organising the food and cash distribution once a month and a few other support activities. In January 2016, CREDO became the only implementing partner in relation to humanitarian interventions in Bobo-Dioulasso. In theory, CREDO also provided

support for education, notably by taking charge of school fees for primary and secondary school students. This involved giving a fixed amount to the parents, who then decided in which school to enrol their children. If they wanted to send them to a private school they would have to complement the money given by CREDO. I never managed to find out what system was used in deciding who received such economic support, as they were always vague about this in our discussions. None of my interlocutors ever got that assistance with many not even knowing it was a possibility. CREDO is funded by UNHCR in all matters related to refugees (they have other non-refugee projects in Burkina Faso), and the two relevant staff members were based in UNHCR's villa in Bobo-Dioulasso.

One of the two staff members was in charge of supporting people with specific needs (PSN – elderly, individuals affected by illness or disabilities, pregnant women, etc.). This means she would visit them from time to time and if a refugee was hospitalized, she would go to visit her. In addition, she supported the community services. She did, for instance, the *'causeries'*, which are sensitisation chats, on topics like sexual and gender based violence (SGBV), forced marriage, psychological violence, and hygiene practices. These 'chats' were organised by the two liaison/community people – two refugees – who would spread the word, organise a meeting point (always at a refugee's house) and then the CREDO worker would join and deliver the talk together with a liaison person. The two liaison people, she told me, were necessary in supporting CREDO's role, as refugees were scattered in the city and they thus operated as bridges between the organisation(s) and the refugees, knowing where they lived and having all the names and contacts. When I was doing fieldwork, the two liaison people in Bobo-Dioulasso (one confirming to me over the

phone in May 2018 that his contract got renewed for another year and supposedly the same was true for the other one) were both men.

In addition to carrying out the sensitisation chats (at its peak they were doing 3-4 each, every month), the liaison people were also in charge of sharing information coming from the humanitarians with the refugees communities. They also visited refugees at home who were struggling for a variety of reasons: for example, Ongoïba one day was going to visit a woman who was having a hard time 'controlling' her daughter. Additionally, when humanitarians came from Ouagadougou they had to mobilise the refugees, in the sense of making sure people would show up at the distribution centre where those meetings took place. They also did hospital visits and offered moral support to people with specific needs. Practically speaking, they completed the majority of CREDO's tasks. At the beginning of the humanitarian intervention in Bobo-Dioulasso, there were 10 refugees employed in that role, working not only for CREDO but for the different partner organisations that were involved. They were then cut down to five (with the number of partners decreasing) and by the time I arrived in town there were only two.

As time moved on and after food and cash assistance was cut for urban refugees, most of my interlocutors did not see the point anymore of the informal chats and other activities undertaken by CREDO. Maybe they already felt that way before, yet they did not express it. They felt that the money for the NGO's activities could have had better use. Furthermore, it had always been quite unclear who was 'invited' to those informal chats and why, as during my time in Bobo-Dioulasso the 'chats' were held at the same households, thus attracting the same audience of neighbours. When I asked the CREDO worker about how they selected the people attending, I was told “we inform them all and some come” (26/01/2016). She probably did not know, as

the person in charge of coordinating these chats was not the CREDO staff member, but rather one of the two liaison people.[84] Similarly, when I was discussing with one of them, who was one of my main interlocutors, he told me that to invite people they just spread the word among the refugees living in the neighbourhood in which the *causerie* was taking place.

In addition to seeing these events as a waste of money, my interlocutors who attended some of the chats did not always find them useful, or really understood their necessity. When UNHCR started cutting funding on all other fronts concerning (urban) refugees, they made sure to keep funding these activities – as these were seen as the flagships of the values that the Agency tried to promote among the African refugee communities. Indeed, the topics discussed were about women's rights, good hygiene practices, forced marriage, SGBV, and so on. These were all very important issues, but I think those were less important than ensuring people avoided debt or assisting paying for children's school fees or food. In my previous research with camp refugees I examined some of these sensitisation campaigns and trainings, and argued that they were perceived by the humanitarian community as "the best way to communicate with and teach the refugees to become 'ideal subjects' or 'ideal refugees' who govern themselves and do not need repressive measures to be controlled" (Bardelli 2015, 70). The same could be said in this case.

How UNHCR kept urban refugees in Bobo-Dioulasso at arms length is clearly perceivable in their ability to always finding funding for these activities and inability to find any for other pressing needs refugees were facing. Additionally, the 'efficacy' of these programmes is questionable, as my interlocutors did not really understand

84. These two were also in charge of making 'lists' whenever UNHCR asked them for it, notably around refugees interested in projects that were about to start – even if most never started – or interested in receiving IGA. See Chapter 4 'Who and what can be supported in Burkina Faso' for a more detailed discussion of what can be problematic in this.

them or see the point of participating in them. These chats were very general and generalising, as well as decontextualized and decontextualizing. I assisted in two of those meetings, which took place in refugees' courtyard in the different neighbourhoods. 'Women', as a group, were the target of sensitization talks on SGBV. They were the targets in that, ideally, those talks should have sensitized women to open up about those issues, but they were also intended for men to change their attitudes. They were done by one of the two refugees acting as community liaison and the staff member of CREDO responsible for this. One of the two *causéries* I went to in January 2016 had 13 women and 5 men; in the second one in April 2016 there were only 9 women and no men. I do not think this is necessarily the most appropriate, or useful way to try and promote change in those areas, in part because it is often the same refugees that attend the meetings. I question whether those refugees – women – would necessarily open up about their experiences with the specific community liaison person, because he is a men, whom in most cases knew their husbands, brothers and cousins. Additionally, the chats felt quite non-context adapted (I saw the script, which was in French, as the chat was mostly in Dioula and I would only understand the general topic and a few words here and there, but not the whole discussion): just saying 'this is your right according to…' will not prove helpful/supportive to someone that does not know how to read and write, did not got to school and does not necessarily knows what the human rights Convention is. Similar issues arose when the talk focused on 'psychological violence', a concept that was used in the French translation, as there is no translation for it in Dioula. In addition to seeing these activities as somehow 'normalizing' refugees,[85] all this could

85. Normalizing is here used in a Foucauldian sense, according to whom "institutions that normalize subjects […] are policing regimes that construct ideal subjects (or ideals of subjects)," as Hoffmann explains (2011, 52).

be analysed through the perspective of Spivak (1988), and her “white men saving brown women from brown men.”

The scope of my research was not to look into these kind of activities promoted by humanitarian agencies and partners, but this brief discussion is nonetheless in line with what will be showed throughout this thesis, notably how decontextualized the humanitarian intervention in Burkina Faso has been, what practical consequences that had, and how disconnected UNHCR's directives seemed to be from the refugees' realities. Outsourcing refugees' protection and assistance makes it harder for the UN agency to realise what is happening on the ground.

Two other main actors involved with urban refugees in Bobo-Dioulasso are the WFP that I will discuss in Chapter 4, and IEDA, which was operating in Bobo-Dioulasso from October 2012 until December 2015. Until February 2013 IEDA was in charge of camp management, which meant it was in charge of running the stadium. Once the refugees at the stadium were relocated (either to the remaining three camps, or in the city) it started managing food and cash distributions and community service. This latter job became a task of CREDO in June 2014 and so IEDA only remained responsible for food and cash distribution and distribution of a few revenue generating activities. This is why IEDA workers' contracts terminated in December 2015, and from January 2016 they were no longer involved in the humanitarian operation in Bobo-Dioulasso.

As a last remark, I want to note that refugees in Bobo-Dioulasso (and in the camps as well) were asked to organise themselves into committees, each with a president, a secretary, and so on. There were three committees when I was doing research: the directing committee – made up of men only, the women committee, and the youth committee. The presidents of the various committees were all of similarly quite

elevated status in terms of socio-economic class and origins (also by all being of light-skin which, as I explained above, is a physical characteristic often used in the Sahel context to distinguish and create hierarchies between and among different groups and individuals). The men and women's presidents at the time I was doing fieldwork (originally two others occupied those places but they went back to Mali by summer 2015) were brother and sister. With this information I want to start showing how power dynamics and inequalities – in accessing programmes or in the cases I mentioned here, attending *causeries* and occupying authority roles in the community committees – can be supported or reproduced by the humanitarian intervention. To conclude the contextual chapter, I need to present one final element: why the refugees I was working with are in a particular situation, in legal and 'integration' terms.

MIGRANTS AND REFUGEES IN BURKINA FASO AND ECOWAS TREATIES

The forced migration of Malians into Burkina Faso is just one of the many mobility configurations that characterises West Africa – where according to Adepoju "migration is a way of life" (2003, 37). This has been so historically and continues today. Before and after colonisation and decolonisation, and in a variety of modes and shapes that challenges simplistic divisions in the reasons or motivations for moving.[86] "West Africa encompasses countries of immigration and emigration as well as those that combine both" (Adepoju 2003, 37) and countries of transit. There is national, sub regional, continental, international, temporary, permanent, seasonal migration and mobility. Yet in my work I do define the mobility I observe as one specific case, the forced migration of Malians, who became legally recognised refugees in Burkina

86. E.g. voluntary versus forced, economic versus disaster-related, or environmental. See Pacere 2004 for a historical overview of migrations and mobilities within, to, and from Burkina Faso.

Faso. I am aware that by doing this I am excluding many Malians that may have left their country of origin for similar reasons as my interlocutors did – indeed, in some of the families I spent time with not all members were registered as refugees – but as my study is primarily about how the category 'refugee' is reproduced and lived, that was necessary.

Mobility, and forced migration too, may be characteristics of West Africa, yet there is a particularity of Malian refugees living in Burkina Faso that needs to be laid bare, as this changes significantly their experience of 'being refugees' compared to that of other refugees in other regions of the world. In addition to the Geneva Convention (1951) and Protocol (1967), and the 1969 OAU Convention, all of which Burkina Faso is a signatory state, there are other legal instruments that govern the rights and duties of Malians and refugees in Burkina Faso. These are of national, bi-lateral, and regional nature. Concerning the latter, ECOWAS was established by a treaty in 1975, to which followed the main Protocol in 1979 and four supplementary ones at later stages. The most important revision to the Treaty in relation to my study is the revision of 1993, which "reconfirmed at Art. 59 the right of Community citizens to enter, reside, and establish themselves in the Member States" (Adepoju et al. 2010, 121). Of course, a member state can always restrict the protocol provisions by applying more restrictive domestic laws on entrance and residency of specific individuals and groups.

Yet free movement and the other rights established in the 1993 revision do not necessarily have to be applied to refugee movements. As Adepoju and colleagues state (2010, 137), the "ECOWAS Treaty is not a refugee instrument." Similarly, "[t]he 1951 Geneva Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees, its 1967 Protocol, and the regional 1969 Organization of Africa Unity Convention governing the

Specific Aspects of Refugee Problems in Africa are not economic instruments." Nevertheless, these authors underline how these different instruments, despite governing different aspects, are not in conflict: they can be applied together. In Burkina Faso, the law relating to the status of refugees[87] unusually combines the two, adding economic rights into the refugee instrument. Article 11 of that law stipulates that all refugees legally registered in Burkina Faso enjoy the same treatment as nationals. This means that refugees have the same rights than those recognised or granted by Burkinabè citizenship except voting; these includes access to the legal and justice system, the right to work, housing rights, education rights and access, welfare, free movement, free transfer of capital and property. In addition, these rights are the same also for Malian residing in Burkina Faso without the refugee status as, in addition to the reification of ECOWAS treaties, the bilateral agreements between the two countries also grant Malians those rights in Burkina Faso.[88]

The situation of Malian urban refugees in Burkina Faso is therefore quite atypical in comparison to other humanitarian interventions around the world, and therefore also in comparison to the literature on similar issues. In other contexts the lack or restriction of rights for refugees is one of the main factors that negatively "shape the opportunities, strategies, vulnerability, and livelihoods of refugees in African cities" (Fábos and Kibreab 2007, 3). This even more true in relation to urban refugees more generally (Kibreab 1999; Fàbos and Kibreab 2007; Malkki 1995a). Moreover, despite 'integration' – *de facto* and *de jure* (Hovil 2014) – never having been institutionally pushed or promoted through programmes, my interlocutors were mostly well

87. Loi N°0.42-2008/AN.
88. Different legal instruments made this possible, the main one being "Convention d'établissement et de circulation des personnes entre la Haute-Volta et le Mali du 30 septembre 1969" (Haute-Volta being the old colonial name of Burkina Faso and changed into this latter by Thomas Sankara in August 1984). This convention states that Burkinabè in Mali and Malians in Burkina Faso are protected by the same laws on employment and social security as nationals. See Pacere 2004 for more details.

integrated. They said it, and I could see it. It is true that the experience of light-skinned Malians could be at times negative, but overall the local community had a positive attitude towards the Malian refugees and vice versa. What helps, in addition to a supportive legal framework, is being able to speak the same language (Bambara and Dioula, which only differ by accents and a few words) and living close to each other, both before the displacement and after. Indeed, my informants all live scattered in various neighbourhoods of the city and most share courtyards with Burkinabè. Many women are involved in 'solidarity groups' in the areas they live in and are never confined within Malians or refugee groups. A couple of my informants shared small businesses with locals, as well as other migrants. They went to their neighbourhood mosques, and their children hung out with the Burkinabè with whom they go to school. They were all brothers, as many told me on various occasions – this also testified to the contextual solidarity and hospitality norms. Norms and practices that Fresia (2009) for instance studied in relation to the more recent, institutional, and formalised ones used in UNHCR's interventions.

Language and socio-cultural similarities, together with legal rights and a positive attitude of the host state and community towards self-settled refugees may not be the only factors playing into the successful co-habitation or integration, but they certainly play a significant role. Integration as perceived by my informants, means they feel at home in Bobo, with up to 75% of my informants not planning on going back to Mali, even when the situation stabilises. They see and imagine themselves as part of the locals.

As long as the various bilateral and regional legal instruments remain in force and valid, even if cessation of status for the Malian refugees in Burkina Faso occurs one day, they would be allowed to legally remain and also to request citizenship. This

multi-layered framework is also what allows for the phenomenon I discuss in Chapter 5 to take place, namely applying for facilitated return, obtaining the return cash grant in Bobo-Dioulasso and then not leaving the city to go back to reside in Mali. Of course, this could happen even without that legal framework, but it eases the process for the refugees – and UNHCR, who does not need to set up procedures to confirm or ensure that refugees actually go back. This particular setting and what I will discuss in Chapter 5 empirically feeds into Long's (2013) proposal for conceptualising 'return' as a political return, and not simply a physical process. It thus also speaks to the critiques of the three traditional durable solutions[89] (see Monsutti 2005b), by showing that other solutions are possible.

Despite ending this chapter on an optimistic note, not everything I observed and studied worked well, was 'durable', or even just. Indeed, by focusing on the refugees' ability/possibility to negotiate with their 'refugee' category, I saw how those possibilities were unequally distributed among them; I argue that the refugee regime can exacerbate those inequalities. I now turn to that argument, which I start building by looking at the more 'global' aspect of the refugee regime and its political economy.

89. These are: local integration (eventually culminating with the acquisition of citizenship), repatriation to the country of origin, and resettlement to a third country.

4.

'THE REFUGEE' REPRODUCED: COMMODIFICATION PROCESSES AND NEOLIBERAL IDEALS

Un doigt ne démoli pas la maison, mais il la montre à ses démolisseurs[90]

PERSONAL BIASES, EMPIRICAL BASIS, AND MY 'EUPHORIA MOMENT'[91]

In July 2016, when I met with the UNHCR BF's national representative, we discussed the cuts in assistance and why they provided food and cash assistance to urban refugees in the first place. She noted that "after all, we're humanitarians… If we can help a bit more why wouldn't we do it?" She was referring to the fact that at the beginning of the refugee operation in Burkina Faso, urban refugees in Bobo-Dioulasso were counted within the national camp aid plan, meaning they were included within securing food assistance programmes, despite the fact that supporting urban refugees was not 'mandatory' in UNHCR and WFP's policies.[92] I felt ambivalent about the comment, as I always felt when I was in UNHCR's building in Ouagadougou. This was partly due to my personal bias of perceiving UNHCR as not doing enough and not being thoughtfully enough for the refugees, despite seemingly having plenty of money. In addition to walking past UNHCR's grand building in Geneva often when completing my master degree, this perception grew when I had the chance of comparing UNHCR's offices in Ouagadougou and some of the refugees'

90. Bambara say: A finger does not wreck a house, but it shows it to its wreckers.
91. Euphoria is "that moment […] when you think you've finally got a handle on the place. Suddenly it feels within your grasp. It's a delusion […] and its followed by the complete despair of ever understanding anything. But at the moment the place feels entirely yours. It's the briefest, purest euphoria" (King 2014, 50).
92. In the UNHCR (2009) policy on urban refugees it is stated that food provision for refugees living in urban context depends on the host-country context, in terms of rights and discrimination the refugees may face (see e.g. points 114/118/119/120). No final criteria are given to determine whether food assistance should be provided or not; it is therefore left to the discretion of the local and regional offices (in this instance, Ouagadougou and Dakar) to take a decision. See also Appendix 3, where such determination is discussed within UNHCR and WHP.

living conditions. I always had a difficult time reconciling the 'shiny' side of UNHCR with the supposedly moral values of humanitarianism.

Ever since my first fieldwork research in 2013 in Burkina Faso, and my first opportunity to grasp how field operations actually work, UNHCR's budgeting has struck me as odd and unfair in many ways. Firstly, when contrasting the material conditions of UNHCR offices and appliances, cars included, and those of a refugee camp – both in the 'refugee area' and the 'offices area'. The camp's offices were very rudimental, with no electricity, running water or mosquito nets, and UNHCR workers never regularly worked there, instead they would only go to the camp on a weekly basis for a meeting. Yet Burkinabè nationals working for CONAREF used those offices daily. Similarly, I was struck by the difference between UNHCR's offices and CONAREF's offices. CONAREF is financed by UNHCR in all their activities related to UNHCR's role in the country. The agency also gave them cars and motorcycles, which CONAREF staff uses to go to the camp, to Bobo-Dioulasso, the camps in the north, and to meetings. These are usually nice vehicles, a few exceptions apart, and are visibly provided 'kindly' by UNHCR: the blue and white stickers located everywhere. What is not visible, are the CONAREF offices – unless one goes looking for them. These are qualitatively different from those of UNHCR, also in terms of appliances (for example computers, printers, chairs, fridges with fresh water and coffee machines). What I am trying to hint at here is how it seems that UNHCR believes its staff working conditions should be of higher quality than those of other actors involved in the refugee situation.[93] This 'two standards' approach and distinction was also intrinsic in the supposedly qualitative difference between

93. The previous UNHCR national representative was quite sensitive about these issues; for instance, he would never allow AC to be switched on in the building, except in particular occasions/meetings, or when the heat was particularly unbearable; this would limit costs and their privileges.

UNHCR international staff and the local staff working for UNHCR.[94] A former international staff member of UNHCR mentioned that the most delicate issues were discussed within UNHCR expatriates' circle only – whether in face to face meetings or through personal conversations/emails. The assumption behind this is that some issues could not be trusted to be shared with the locals, as they may discuss them with friends or family, some of whom may be journalist or politicians, meaning 'sensitive information' (according to UNHCR) could get out into the public Burkinabè sphere.[95]

A second aspect that fuelled into my bias against UNHCR and its budget allocations, came from a discussion I had with a senior Red Cross delegate; this person told me how what reaches refugees, in terms of assistance – food, healthcare, infrastructures in the camp, activities, etc. – was a maximum 15% of the total budget of the country office of UNHCR. "They're a machine with no empathy, they're only interested in profits, and everyone knows that max 15% of the budget gets to the beneficiaries, the rest is used to keep the machine rolling. They're utilitarian and great strategists, they're not humanitarians" (Ouagadougou, 04/02/14). A UNHCR staff member in Ouagadougou confirmed this to me a few years later; I was told that yes, those numbers are close to reality, "we think now it's about 20% of the total national office budget that gets to the refugees [in a more or less direct way]." Yet, this person also told me how often, in that 20%, they manage to account for other items. The example I was given being "the salary of the engineer who built the new showers in the camp."

94. See also Fassin 2010, 2012.

95. Paternalistic, neo-colonial and racialized structural aspects of UNHCR's work (though the expatriates are African too, just not Burkinabè and highly educated or with previously working experience in Europe or the U.S.) would deserve a whole thesis in itself. Fassin (2007) also discusses the distinction made by MSF between "expatriates" and local/national staff. Furthermore, new and fascinating work on this is being written currently by a colleague of mine, Myfanwy James, who focuses on the role of whiteness within MSF in DRC.

These thoughts were a reflection of a personal bias, personal bias about 'big money', corporations and businesses or economic interests 'running the world'. What I therefore try to do in this chapter and in this thesis more broadly, is to analytically look into these issues and show rigorously how the political economy of the refugee regime currently works, and how that can be problematic. It is not only the shiny, visible side of UNHCR that is so affected by money, money-making, and money-thinking. In my fieldwork I realised how refugeeness and the way refugees are dealt – or not dealt – with, and thought about and performed, are in part commodified (in the sense of being given a worth/value). This is not what I originally set out to do in my PhD project. The issues presented in this disclosure of my personal biases, yet supported by empirical reality, came to the centre stage of my dissertation when I had my 'euphoria moment'. This is described at length in Chapter 5 but suffice to say for these purposes, that during a meeting between UNHCR, WFP, CONAREF, the other organisations involved in the refugee assistance, and the refugees themselves,[96] I realised two things: that something reminding me of a commodification of vulnerability and the refugee status was happening, and that refugees could 'capitalize' on their legal status if needed/wanted. The category refugee was in this instance being reproduced as a potential capital asset. Later on, I emailed my supervisors as I felt there was more to that issue that I could grasp at the moment. It was the first time I used the term commodification in relation to what I was observing, more precisely in relation to how "the exchange of the status against XOF35,000 […] made me think of a commodification of vulnerability and legal status." In that communication, I also linked those reflections to my broader concern with categorisations processes, notably by wondering whether what I had just

96. The aim of this meeting (16/10/2015) was to announce to the urban refugees in Bobo-Dioulasso that from January 2016, they would not receive food and cash assistance anymore.

described corresponded to different expressions of what embodying the refugee status and the opportunities going with it, could mean and imply. I was unaware of this but it was then that I started elaborating my argument about who is a worthy refugee, about inequalities produced or reinforced by the refugee regime, about hierarchies of refugeeness.

When beginning to analyse the links between those 'commodifications' and the broader workings of the refugee regime, it became clearer how such a commodification process was not an isolated instance within the regime. Rather, it was one form of broader yet related tendencies of today's humanitarianism. What I discuss in this chapter is therefore a journey through the political economy of the refugee regime, and my argument that the processes at work can eventually commodify refugeeness, therefore establishing a hierarchy of which 'refugee' is more valued. This journey is concerned with tendencies in today's refugee regime that, I maintain, are entangled with global capitalist logics and seem to impact the refugee regime at various levels.[97] This journey will eventually identify commodification and 'neoliberalisation' as important rationales characterising the refugee regime.[98]

97. It needs to be noted that the work most humanitarians do on the ground should be praised; similarly, without the intervention of many aid organisations millions of refugees worldwide would be in worse positions. What is problematic though, is the way the regime and UNHCR can be working, and the ideals they are in some instances following.

98. Other recent anthropological work has focused on how, for instance, compassion (Fassin) or care (Ticktin) became the vector through which the work of government (in its Foucauldian conception) over certain populations is carried out in humanitarianism. My work does something similar by arguing that capital is now doing that work in the refugee regime, and I try to unveil "the transnational institutions, discourses, and practices" (Ticktin 2011, 2) that allow it. This does not mean that other rationalities – such as moral humanitarianism, securitisation or bureaucratisation – are not still at play in the refugee regime, but that it is the one I focus on as being mostly telling in light of the data I collected and the analysis I carried out.

INTRODUCTION

Refugeeness is produced in the first place by the refugee regime, but refugees, as well as other actors in that context, constantly reproduce and re-create refugeeness in particular social situations and interactions.[99] In this dissertation, I argue that refugeeness is commodified. Specifically, I argue that a number of elements playing into the construction and making up of 'the refugee' participate in this commodification. Some of these elements are: the interactions between humanitarians and refugees; UNHCR interventions and discourses; the representations humanitarian agencies mobilise for survival; the relations between UNHCR, donors, and host states that also regulate the operations on the ground; refugees' embodiment and negotiation of the category and status; and the way durable solutions are nowadays conceptualised. The latter is specifically a reflection of the way in which 'the refugee problem' is thought about. I argue that a commodified understanding and construction of refugeeness, coupled with entrepreneurial and neoliberal tendencies, characterise the current refugee regime. And those tendencies are particularly reproduced in a refugee figure that I encountered in Burkina Faso and that I discuss at length in this chapter. Thus, to understand how the category is reproduced, lived, and represented today, we need to also situate it within the current political economy of UNHCR, which I take as the main actor of the refugee regime.

Some of UNHCR's most recent projects to support refugees can be described as following a capitalist logic and being neoliberal in their aims. The Agency's strategies and discourses for refugees to be accepted and welcomed are often based on the

99. Other regimes participate into this construction and in regulating/governing forced migrants: the migration regime, the human rights regime, border regimes, and so on; but they do so in a lesser measure for this work's focus. For an approach that aims at unveiling how these different regimes are all connected and mutually constituting each others, see Betts (2010) and the notion of 'refugee regime complex'.

migrants' economic contributions to their host societies. Art works of refugees (rather, refugees' crafts improved in design for Western taste and re-defined as art) are sold in the international luxury market. Fairs are held in various locations around the world with companies showcasing their emergency and humanitarian products. Durable solutions are increasingly thought of as supporting refugees entering the job market. These dynamics[100] participate in the reproduction a very specific kind of 'worthy refugee' that I qualify as 'neoliberal refugee.

In order to argue this, the chapter starts by discussing further the literature on commodities and commodification processes I briefly presented in the introduction, as it is by engaging with these theories that I am able to take an analytical stance towards the personal biases and the empirical basis I shared. I then tackle three main issues from a double perspective, one looking at the general tendency of the refugee regime on that issue, and the other one illustrating how that plays out in the localised context of Burkina Faso. The first matter I reflect upon is UNHCR's funding system, which can play into the creation of hierarchies between refugees because of its funding being inconsistent and unstable, and the consequent need to find different strategies to compensate these uncertainties. After this, I introduce UNHCR's most recent projects to support displaced persons and highlight some entrepreneurial or neoliberal tendencies of the Agency. This opens the space to discuss why and how the current refugee regime and the commodification of refugeeness can be, in my view and analysis, problematic. I do so by highlighting how nowadays aid agencies are increasingly promoting a view of labour and capital investment as a solution to protracted refugee situations, an approach which inherently pushes some to 'fail' in

100. Looking at the humanitarian innovation turn, Scott-Smith (2016, 2242), argues that such "movement does not just involve forging temporary alliances with businesses in order to secure funding or purchase supplies; it adopts, wholesale, the priorities, language and world-view of the private sector."

that system and to be excluded from it. The conclusion of the chapter introduces a more localised feature of the contemporary refugee regime.

COMMODIFICATION AND COMMODITY FETISHISM

When commodities are fetishized, the social and political side of their production (and consumption) get concealed; the same is valid for commodification processes. By this I mean that how such processes are produced, reproduced, and came about get 'lost', go unnoticed and unquestioned. When something is commodified, that something – be it a thing, a person or category, a process, a relation – passes "from one logic of disposition, and one life-world, to another logic of disposition and another life-world which is substantially differently structured even though both are likely to coexist in the same place and time" (Van Binsbergen 2005, 42). Taussig (2010, 27), when discussing the commoditization processes of our societies, tells us that "[t]he commodity definition of human labor and its products disguises both the humanly creative and social basis of value and the exploitation of that creativity by the market system." In my case, 'the refugee' becomes something that seems to have certain objective characteristics and features, as if an objective entity – this is the specificity of commodification and fetishism processes. Deconstructing how 'refugeeness' is becoming commodified allows me to unveil the social and political that is behind those constructions, the power relations, actors, institutions and history that make/made them such. As Scott-Smith said (2016, 2235), when something is commodified (aid, in his case), human relations and power differentials are removed and so become invisible. Yet they are still there.

Commodifying refugeeness conceals various elements that constitute it. Namely, all the constructedness of 'the refugee' as a legal, social, and political category and label, and its interactions with the lived experiences of people who end up in that category. On top of this, we need to also consider the forces at play behind their movements, and the institutions and intersectional dimensions impacting/participating in their lives. For example, part of UNHCR's measures and projects in Burkina Faso seemed to assume that societal dynamics, interactions, and experiences tend to happen in the same 'economic' and 'rational choice' way. To use Kockelman's words, "[i]mplicit in this strategy is a widespread theory of human motivation, one which reduces social interaction to individual action, individual action to purposeful behaviour, purposeful behaviour to strategic decisions, strategic decisions to a means-end calculus based on knowledge and value" (2006, 77). In his study looking at an ecological-touristic project promoted by a German NGO in rural Guatemala, he argues "underlying this NGO's agenda is neoliberal worldview – one which fosters market-based social relations in order to promote individual enterprise as the pervasive mode of social conduct" (Ibid.). Historical, structural, and socio-political dimensions and identity markers co-constructing my informants' lives, and refugees' lives in general, are not taken into account in the construction of 'the refugee'. I am not suggesting that a capitalist society and neoliberal ideals erase those differences, they usually exacerbate them in outcomes, reinforcing inequalities and injustices between different groups of people. I am suggesting that such a 'worldview' in the refugee regime does not allow for differences and intersectional inequalities to be taken into account in programmes and interventions. This lack of contextualisation has been a recurring problem underlined in forced migration and refugee studies,[101] as

101. See for example Lammers 1999; Hajdukowsky-Ahmed et al. 2008; Fiddian-Qasmiyeh 2014a; Kaiser 2016. These authors all underline the necessity of using a gender perspective when studying

those dimensions influence people's lives, choices, opportunities, and constraints. As such, these dimensions should be considered in agencies' reflections and designs. Lack of this will lead, as I will develop in the next chapters, to a variety of outcomes, not all positive for my informants' lives.

I thus develop various facets, aspects and outcomes of commodifying tendencies at play in the refugee regime in this and the following two chapters, each one focusing on a different aspect eventually partaking in the commodification of Malian refugeeness. Tsing (2005, 51) suggests that "the closer we look at the commodity chain, the more every step – even transportation – can be seen as an arena of cultural production. Global capitalism is made in the friction in these chains as divergent cultural economies are linked, often awkwardly. Yet the commodity must emerge as if untouched by this friction." The commodity I study is refugeeness, but I approached it quite differently than if it was a material commodity. Indeed, my focus is not primarily how the final product – refugeeness, or even the refugee category – might be profitable for some, but mostly on unveiling the concealed social and political dimensions that can be observed in such moments of friction, between the refugee regime and my informants' lives. I am interested in how the human (and refugee) condition and social and political interactions are objectified through those processes and encounters. And this is why I suggest to also use the notion of commodification as an analytical tool to unveil how refugeeness is 'made up'. To go back to Tsing's words, refugeeness can thus be understood as produced and distributed in various spheres and chains, in the different arenas of cultural production. These arenas can be the refugee regime itself, for example objectifying

forced migrations. See Van Hear (2014) for why we should consider the role class plays in migration experiences. Surprisingly, racial/racist dynamics are less considered in this field of study (particularly when focused on south-south migrations), yet they can be very relevant in people's lives.

the human conditions of refugees through an entrepreneurial approach in its 'job', but it is also what happens in the refugees' arena, and this will be discussed in chapters 5 and 6. These frictions, interfaces, encounters, all participate in making refugeeness, and by extent 'the refugee' (which can signify a variety of different things for different actors in different places). “Each of this little worlds forms part of the production” (Tsing 2005, 54) of, in my case, contemporary refugeeness – which is actually not an objective reality, but has real outcomes. These outcomes can take the form of hierarchies and inequalities between refugees, as I show in this dissertation.

UNHCR'S FUNDING SYSTEM

UNHCR's funding system is the topic I first got interested in which relates to the political economy of the refugee regime. Yet this topic is important not only because of my intellectual curiosity. The link with my theoretical argument may not always be explicit, as, contrary to other works, I am not trying to show the profitable and business side of UNHCR or humanitarianism, or analyse how states may or may not have economic interests in donating to UNHCR. Rather, I am briefly addressing this issue as it has an impact over how UNHCR works and takes decisions (or implement directives). Additionally, the issue of unstable and inconstant funding of UNHCR is used not only to justify cuts in assistance, as it is the case in Burkina Faso, but also to start partnerships with private corporations and to legitimise the need of strategic campaigns to ensure the Agency's survival. My dissertation is also a critique of the political economy of UNHCR, hence a brief overview of how it economically functions is necessary. As Loescher stated in his work about UNHCR workings, “[o]ne cannot fully understand the UNHCR without a knowledge of its organizational

culture" (2001, 1). What I offer here is a glimpse into one of the many aspects of the Agency's organizational culture.

UNHCR AND ITS DONORS: A LONG, NECESSARY, AND COMPLICATED RELATIONSHIP

To carry out all the interventions that it is mandated for, UNHCR needs funding. UNHCR does not have a permanent source of money: the agency depends on donations/contributions to be able to conceive and implement its programmes – in the widest sense, this includes infrastructures in refugee camps and also salaries, work-trips, electricity for the HQ in Geneva, and so on. In 2017, 76% of donations to UNHCR came from states, 8% from privates (foundations and businesses included), 13% from intergovernmental bodies, and only 3% from UN funds, for a total budget of around 3.5 billion dollars (UNHCR 2017a). UNHCR's "assistance activities are divided broadly into General and Special Programs.[102] Each year, the High Commissioner's Executive Committee approves a General Program budget […] and appeals to all UN members for the resources needed to cover the program year" (Loescher 1993, 131). When unforeseen humanitarian emergencies happen (e.g. 'the Rohingya crisis' in 2017), upon request of the Secretary-General or the General Assembly, UNHCR launches 'Supplementary Appeals' to fund interventions in these emergencies; these programs "are the subject of specific fundraising appeals to interested governments" (Loescher 1993, 131).

102. These are currently called Global Appeal and Supplementary Appeals.

Briefly after its establishment, the agency created a system of earmarked donations, for states to have 'interests' in making donations.[103] Contributing to this agency is perceived as part of the obligation of international cooperation in finding solutions for the 'heavy burdens' that the grant of asylum can have on certain countries.[104] Still, "[s]tate's contributions to burden sharing are […] discretionary" (Betts et al. 2012, 96). Therefore, "[r]ather than relying upon moral authority, the politics of burden sharing has historically meant that UNHCR has had to recognize and channel states' interests in other policy fields, such as security, migration, and development, into a commitment to refugee protection" (Ibid.). Earmarking concretely means that states, when contributing to UNHCR's budgets, can direct the donations towards specific program or geographical areas where UNHCR operates. States earmarked contributions' levels can be 'regional', 'sub-regional', 'country', 'thematic' or 'sector'.[105] In 2017, 85% of all donations to UNHCR was earmarked.[106] This option of directing donations puts UNHCR in a delicate situation, giving states a huge influence over the Agency and making "[s]tate interests […] increasingly drive all funding decisions"[107] (Weiss 2013, 141). The way UNHCR is funded, due to this entrenchment with various states' interests, makes it a very unjust system, where some countries and refugees will always be more 'worthy' than others. It is clear, for example, that Mali, Malian refugees, and Burkina Faso seem less worthy than other situations. In the past 5 years (2013-2017) the Malian refugee situation and countries

103. Betts and colleagues (2012, 99) explained that "[t]he advantage of allowing earmarking, rather than instating on the common pooling of all contributions, is that it creates an incentive for states to contribute to UNHCR's work, albeit for partly self-interested reasons. This is because it allows them to prioritize the allocation of their funding in ways that simultaneously meet the donor states' own strategic aims."
104. As established in the 1951 Convention relating to the Status of Refugees, and the 1967 Protocol.
105. Personal email conversation with a UNHCR's officer (December 10, 2013); this information is confirmed by the UNHCR Glossary, http://reporting.unhcr.org/gloss (accessed 10/11/2017).
106. Earmarking Trend, UNHCR, data up to November 6 2017; http://reporting.unhcr.org/contributions?t=e. Accessed 10/11/2017
107. These interests are not only economical ones; see for example Loescher 2001; Barnett 2011.

hosting Malian refugees never made it in the 'top 10' earmarked situations in the African continent.[108] Why some countries gather more interest than other will not be developed in this work, but it seems evident that where one is recognised and hosted as a refugee will change the assistance that person will receive.[109]

There are two major issues arising from this way of running the agency and its operations: 1) the inconsistence of funding, from which derives a financial gap in some, if not most, operations, and the necessity to cut some of the programmes or assistance; and 2) the need to 'sell' their product, either to states or to privates.

'Luckily' for Burkina Faso and the Mali operations, some donations are not earmarked and can be directed to more 'forgotten' operations, but this is never entirely sufficient. The financial gap between what UNHCR BF national office asks for/needs and what is actually received has been described to me as a major problem for field operations since 2013. "There are very few donors that are interested in the Mali operation, as all donations and funding are going to Syria… So… we do with what we have" (UNHCR officer, 05/07/2013, Ouagadougou). The funding reality for the Mali operation seems to just have gotten worst since then.[110] "The Malian crisis became a forgotten crisis," the UNHCR BF representative told me once more at the end of my fieldwork, in July 2016. Both the refugees and myself, when having meetings/interviews with members of the organisations about the lack of funding in Burkina Faso, heard many times sentences like 'there are crisis everywhere in the world', 'donors are asking us to only help the vulnerable refugees, and as a consequence means to help urban refugees are not there anymore.' Donors, a vague

108. See http://reporting.unhcr.org/contributions?t=e; accessed 10/11/2017
109. See Appendix 2, depicting a hygiene kit for Syrian refugees in Jordan, and one for Malian refugees in Burkina Faso.
110. In 2017, UNHCR BF got funded only at 18% of the demanded budget, creating a gap of $16.7 millions https://data2.unhcr.org/en/documents/download/60472. Accessed 16/11/2017.

figure in those discourses, were used by UNHCR and WFP as the entity/people responsible for the cut in assistance when talking to the refugees; they were pointed at as the ones making choices for UNHCR and WFP in Burkina Faso.[111]

In the WFP offices, I was told that "donors put pressure on us to cut the spending, saying it's already been lasting for over 4 years, and you're maintaining them all, you need to give just to the vulnerable ones" (WFP staff member, 13/04/2016). Yet this official discourse was contradicted by one of 'their own', demonstrating that donors do have an influence on UNHCR and WFP, but these agencies also have a certain room for manoeuvre in negotiating how the funding will be used. Indeed, a UNHCR officer told me how the EU, one of the donors in Burkina Faso, communicated to UNHCR in 2015 (or late 2014, he could not remember precisely), that "we had to stop maintaining all people in the camps and had to stop with this camp nonsense, and where are our famous alternative to camps and so on" (Ouagadougou, 14/04/2016). This staff member explained to me that a project was then made, with a potential budget of 10 million Euros (the amount the EU had agreed to give for such a project) to think about how they could slowly transform the camps in towns, or at least include them in surrounding villages and towns in a formal way. This could be achieved by building services, transforming their nurseries in CSPS, moving the school under the appropriate Burkinabè ministry, and so on. When this project was actually designed by a staff member of UNHCR, it received mixed reaction in the office. Most of the staff members did not know how to implement it, having no idea how to run operations that were not camp related, as that staff member told me. "The

111. The WFP is the agency in charge of providing food assistance – and cash as well, when possible; yet, no decision is taken on the issue without consultation with UNHCR; see Appendix 3. "WFP provides refugees with food and cash assistance in Burkina Faso; "the decision to implement general food assistance, including the rations to be provided, will be taken jointly by UNHCR and WFP" (UNHCR & WFP 2011, 6). The cash assistance was introduced between August and October 2013; the food assistance refugees were receiving since 2012 was cut in half at that moment, and XOF3,500 per person were given as complement to that (UNHCR BF 08/2013).

project exists, but not really the skills and the will to do it" (Ouagadougou, 14/04/2016). The use of 'the donors told us to do that' does not hold for everything happening in the field, and institutional politics at every level should be analysed to properly understand the functioning of use of funding of UNHCR.

A similar rhetoric used as justification for the lack of means in Burkina Faso was also taken up by some of the refugees. For instance, if Betty openly told me that the end of food and cash assistance for urban refugees was seen as a clear move from UNHCR to push refugees to camps, Assadeck, when discussing those same issues, told me more than once that "UNHCR doesn't have money anymore, that's how it is, they do what they can with the means they have" (11/12/2015). He did not see it as an intentional move to get them to leave the city, as his cousin did. Though later on in my fieldwork, he clearly distanced himself from such a vision and started being more critical of UNHCR (more on this in Chapter 5).

Another point that confirmed me that the agency's local offices do have a certain level of flexibility, was when staff members of both WFP and UNHCR complained about the way the assistance plan for Malian refugees was implemented in the first place. When explaining to me how urban refugees in Bobo-Dioulasso started receiving assistance in 2012, they all made clear that the previous directors of the Burkinabè offices took that decision. A senior officer of UNHCR told me how some directives do come from the Geneva HQ, others from Dakar (West Africa regional HQ), but other measures are decided specifically in Burkina Faso (Ouagadougou, 14/04/2016). The directive to support Malian urban refugees in Bobo-Dioulasso was a previous local decision and does not appear to be supported by the current local directors of the agencies. This shows how certainly, donors do put pressures on

UNHCR (and WFP) and their programmes, yet important choices to be made on the specific use of funding on the ground are not entirely imposed by donors.

Where UNHCR has less room for manoeuvre is in the constant need to secure funding and what it needs to do in order to guarantee its institutional survival: its need to 'sell its products', which happen to be people experiencing a varied range of challenging situations.

A NEED TO 'SELL ITS PRODUCT': HOW CERTAIN REPRESENTATIONS ARE MOBILISED BY UNHCR FOR INSTITUTIONAL SURVIVAL

UNHCR has the responsibility for raising the funds it needs, that is, for launching appeals that will persuade individuals, organisations, and governments to support their relief programmes. "[R]efugees have become both the means and the end" (Harrell-Bond et al. 1992, 205) in the refugee regime. If states' donations do not solely depend on the visual campaigns of UNHCR, these remain a crucial part for the agency to convince privates to give to their 'mission', or more generally, it creates legitimacy to what they do and guarantees states' support. Loescher (2001, 13-14) emphasized this point when explaining that states do respond to refugee crisis covered by media campaigns, which often take up on UNHCR and other agencies' communication efforts. This goes to satisfy "the demands of the media and public opinion for some kind of action to alleviate human suffering" (Loescher 2001, 14).

Scholars[112] have discussed for a long time how humanitarian agencies have been depicting refugees and other people 'in need' in stereotyped and questionable ways in order to get funding. Yet this remains a debated/debatable issue, as well as the easiest

112. E.g. Harrell-Bond and Voutira 1992; Malkki 1996; Rajaram 2002; Fiddian-Qasmiyeh 2014b; Wright 2014.

way to show how refugees' images are objectified to raise funding and moral attention. Individuals possessing the refugee status are depicted on a poster or website as the representatives of a whole refugee community needing help. Of course, the issue is more complex than that and since the end of the 1990's, UNHCR and other aid agencies have been fighting with "'compassion fatigue' brought about by overexposure to humanitarian crises" (Loescher 2001, 18). This means that the agency needs to always reinvent its campaigns and marketing strategies, and find new ways of 'touching' people so that donations and attention continue. Unfortunately, there is a lack of studies carried out from inside UNHCR on the politics of its most recent campaigns, based on 'strategic/engagement communication' methods, coming from the journalistic field (Meneguello Bressan and Bardelli 2014). "The strategic communications section was established in 2013 to develop an integrated global strategic communications framework for the organization" (UNHCR 2015b; this unit is under the Division of external relation). This unit is devoted, on the one side, to self-promotion and guaranteeing that globally the image of UNHCR's work is unified. On the other side, the unit is focused on ensuring that the messages and stories it shares – through its website, social media, and advertisements – reach the widest possible audience, and that it will affect the audience to a point whereby they donate or advocate with their states for donations and political engagement (Meneguello Bressan and Bardelli 2014).

In the 1990s, Malkki (1996) questioned media and agencies' representations of displaced people, as they were predominantly depicting all refugees as a speechless and miserable 'sea of humanity'. UNHCR's campaigns of the last decade could be described, in opposition to those studied by Malkki, as being 'individualised' ones, based on the logic of 'giving voice to the refugees'. Yet, building on Meneguello

Bressan's archival research,[113] we claimed how even those campaigns end up once more homogenising and objectifying refugees, and represent "nothing more than a public relation strategy, not necessarily – nor effectively – giving voices to those who are forcibly displaced" (Meneguello Bressan and Bardelli 2014). Such depictions can participate in the construction of a specific 'ideal refugee', which will correspond to the one represented and supported by the agency; in Chapter 6 I will explain more explicitly why this matter in relation to my argument about hierarchies of refugeeness.

UNHCR's publications and advertisements and the use of refugees' images and stories, is probably one of the 'simpler' aspects of the refugee regime to show as being a commodifying process – in the sense of objectifying and creating a 'product' which is decontextualized and is valued as the legitimate refugee.

In addition to these aspects of UNHCR's funding and political economy, there are two other dimensions I briefly want to mention here; the first one relates to an aspect of aid that has been more explicitly studied in light of marketisation or commodification tendencies. The second one I have mentioned in the introduction as another reason why I choose economic anthropology and the notion of commodification for my analysis, and has to do with the 'neoliberalisation'/marketisation, or 'entrepreneurial' tendencies, characterising UNHCR.

113. A diachronic analysis based on archival research on UNHCR's publications and posters (Meneguello Bressan, forthcoming).

A (PARTLY) MARKETISED AND ENTREPRENEURIAL REFUGEE REGIME

In the realm of aid and humanitarianism, there is one aspect that is more openly discussed as commodified or marketised, in the sense of being characterised by commodification exchanges or/and where profits are made and competition plays a role, which is the provision of material aid. A number of scholars have looked at the significant business behind assistance provision in humanitarian settings, studying "those who seek to profit from misery" (Weiss 2013, 5).[114] Others have looked into the political economy of humanitarian crisis and/or the political economy of conflicts: for Carbonnier, an interesting field is the one of 'humanitarian economics', which "focuses on the (re)distribution of power, wealth, income and destitution in specific historical and institutional crisis settings" (2016, 4). Marketing-oriented studies on this topic also exist, seemingly concerned with how to enter the humanitarian market.[115] Similarly, a thesis could be dedicated to studying humanitarian fairs and expositions, and the refugee regime/humanitarianism as a marketplace.[116]

Existing works on these issues seem to predominantly look at what can be defined as the assistance aspect of the refugee regime, namely the more evidently material side of aid, and thus more easily connected to commodities exchange, marketisation and entrepreneurship. Yet I find there are other aspects that are more important to mention and study in relation to neoliberal/entrepreneurial tendencies of UNHCR. One relates to how UNHCR outsources and subcontracts part of its tasks – as per its mandate – to both governmental and non-governmental agencies. In Burkina Faso, just as an example, education was subcontracted to Terres des Hommes, community support to CREDO, and food distribution to IEDA.

114. E.g. Barnes, 2005; Klein 2007; Gunewardena and Schuller, 2008; Daley 2013b; Carbonnier 2016.
115. I am no expert in that field, but see for example, Van Wassenhove 2006; Nielsen et al. 2013a, 2013b.
116. See for example www.aid-expo.com/welcome or http://dihad.org. Accessed on 13/11/2017.

Another – more contemporary – key element in what could be termed a 'neoliberalisation' turn within UNHCR are partnerships with private and (economic) development actors, such as the IKEA Foundation or the World Bank. Particularly important are the outcomes such partnerships can have on the programmes implemented through those funding schemes, which, as it will be discussed in this chapter, in Burkina Faso participated in reproducing the figure of 'the neoliberal refugee'. In addition of interactions with private actors in regards to donations and the provision of material aid, UNHCR welcomes the increased "engagement of the World Bank and multilateral development banks and improvements in access to concessional development financing for affected communities, and encourages mobilization of private sector investment in support of refugee communities and host countries" (UNHCR 2016, 9). This mobilization takes three main forms according to UNHCR: "working with financial institutions to develop financial products that suit refugees' needs; establishing links with global supply chains for products made by refugees; and linking with private companies to increase hiring of refugees."[117] Development actors and the private sector are encouraged to support efforts such as local integration (and specifically integration in the local job-market) through the above-mentioned forms (UNHCR 2016, 16). This happens particularly via new initiatives such as the Global Concessional Financing Facilities, run by the World Bank Group and with whom UNHCR is partnering in a growing number of countries.[118] As ethnographic accounts will help illustrate further down, programmes supported through those initiatives, and their focus on 'helping refugees help themselves', can be analysed in light of what I defined as neoliberal ideals in the

117. http://www.unhcr.org/uk/private-sector-engagement.html. Some of these forms are observable in Burkina Faso, as I will discuss shortly. See also UNHCR Global Report 2017, particularly the section on 'Expanding Partnerships' (UNHCR 2017c, 14-27).
118. https://www.unhcr.org/uk/news/latest/2016/9/57e3d0db4/unhcr-welcomes-new-finance-instrument-aid-refugees-hosts.html.

introductory chapter of this dissertation. Yet what I am more concerned with, is the impact such an approach and ideals have in the reification of a specific figure of refugee, the 'neoliberal refugee', and what this means in terms of hierarchies of refugeeness and inequalities among refugees.

It is true that this 'move' cannot be reduced to a neoliberal rationality only (as if it were the only one of the refugee regime's rationalities), but has also to do with the increasing difficulties in funding humanitarian operations, as well as harsh political and social realities of host countries in which refugees live. Indeed, if agencies like UNHCR can show that refugees take charge of themselves, and even bring positive change to host communities, host countries and local populations might be more accepting. This is not a new approach for aid agencies, particularly in the African continent, but I contend that the way it is done now is both in continuity with and different from past programmes, as there currently are some contemporary, neoliberal features.

'OLD AND NEW' SELF-SUFFICENCY PROGRAMMES

Programmes supporting refugees' livelihood and self-reliance through work in the African continent were a common response to refugee situations in the 1970s and 1980s (Milner 2009). What I explore in this chapter, 'integrating refugees to the job market' is not a new idea about how to 'deal' with refugee populations within the African refugee regime, but it is a re-actualised and seemingly less context-adapted approach. I believe that new programmes targeting refugees' self-sufficiency are less focused on the 'whole' – whether it was a national, village, or community 'whole'. Starting in the 1960s, and increasingly in the 1970s and into the most part of the

1980s, “[r]efugees were seen not as a challenge for humanitarian aid, but as an opportunity for growth” (Glasman 2017, 347). UNHCR was particularly keen in pushing forward 'refugee settlements' so “to integrate refugees in their host country” (Ibid.). The first African rural settlements for refugees or asylum seekers opened in the early 1960s, and “were based on agricultural activities and aimed for 'self-sufficiency'. […] 'Rural settlements schemes' were seen not only as a solution for arriving refugees, but also as potential catalysts for rural development as a whole” (Ibid.).

Importantly though, refugees seemed to have access to a wider array of rights and opportunities through those measures than what they have now. Crisp stressed how “[m]any refugees enjoyed reasonably secure living conditions and were able to benefit from a range of legal, social and economic rights. Considerable numbers of refugees were provided with land and encouraged to become self-sufficient. In some states, refugees were allowed to settle permanently and to become naturalized citizens” (Crisp 2000, 4). Also when living in camps, refugees were enabled “to acquire land and engage in economic activities which earned them a dignified living” (Rutinwa 1999, 7). Across the continent, refugees “were allowed to till land and keep animals […]. Refugees were allowed equal access to the health and education services as well as the job market, both in the private and public sectors” (Ibid., 7-8).

Legally, this is the case in Burkina Faso. Yet the programmes that are today implemented are not the same as those from the 1970s and 1980s, nor the (West) African reality is the same. The 1990s changed/-ing attitudes to asylum in the African continent[119] meant that self-sufficiency rights and opportunities did not looked like possible anymore (spatially, this was formalised in the “large size of modern refugee

119. See Milner 2009 for a detailed analysis of the various factors that played into those changed policies, perceptions, and discourses.

camps and the way refugee settlements are maintained" according Rutinwa – 1999, 14). Are we today, in 2018, going back to what has been called the "'golden age' of asylum in Africa" (Rutinwa 1999, 4)?[120]

I think the answer is no, because we are in a very different context today. A different context (historical, social and importantly political) at both the local, the African and the global scale, where refugees are now generally seen more as a burden than as a positive force bringing a wide range of benefits for host societies (whether in terms of work force and production, or in broader terms – in the 1960s and 1970s "the hosting of refugees was a source of pride for African states" – Milner 2009, 2). Today, a variety of phenomenon make the context very different than it was forty years ago: increased border policing and policies restricting movement (including a large support for encampment solutions; see Milner 2009, Crisp 2000, Rutinwa 1999); growing terrorism and (in-)security threats; global inequalities on the rise and decrease of funding for humanitarian operations in Africa; and different political economies and ideologies. The latter are also mirrored in the current emphasis of self-sufficiency programmes put on the individual and her responsibilisation, rather than on the positive impact of hosting refugees more generally at a societal level. Additionally, it seems like in the 1970s and 1980s African states had more of a say or were more involved regarding the programmes implemented with the support of the refugee regime.

However, the initiatives I discuss in the following sections are more directed towards single individuals – who need to become individually responsible – and are primarily designed and implemented by UNHCR. As Milner states, "while UNHCR and other agencies provided significant support for this approach, with UNHCR

120. Which entirely golden was actually not (see Milner 2009, particularly p. 4).

spending some two-thirds of its global programme funds in Africa by 1960 (UNHCR, 2000a, 37), credit was mostly given to African states for adopting such open asylum policies" (Milner 2009, 21). It seems that the way in which refugees' self-sufficiency was promoted in the 1970s and 1980s was generally more in line with what was happening and apparently working in the broader contexts in which they took place, in line with the larger political tendencies and interventions. Those were marked by (rural) developmental programs, promoted by African leaders in the decolonisation era and strongly supported by UN agencies and the World Bank.[121]

What I think is thus the significant contemporary feature of today's programmes encouraging self-sufficiency is the individualization of those programmes. In particular, the idea that those responsible for the successes and failures of such programmes are now the individuals at whom they are aimed, and not a difficult context (whether in terms of restricting policies; social discrimination towards foreigners; or structurally high unemployment) or states and aid organizations that might implement interventions that are not always adapted to people's realities. This is also because the current programs are aligned, at least in terminology and emphasis, on 'neoliberal ideals' in regard to conceptions of work and individual, whereby responsible, self-entrepreneur, independent, innovative refugees are "the best possible refugee" (to use Glasman's term – 2017, 349) for those programmes. Yet this figure, this construction, seems very hard to reach for Malian refugees living in Bobo-Dioulasso. Some discourses and practices within the refugee regime, particularly those explored in the next pages, are taking a 'neoliberal turn' and this in

121. Of course, the refugee settlement programmes of the 1970s and 1980s were not received without a dose of criticism: both from a technical (from an agricultural point of view) and 'ideological' perspectives, and also by scholars/observers in whose eyes "UNHCR settlements not only failed to make refugees 'self-sufficient', but actually made them dependent on relief aid (Harvey and Lind 2005). Notoriously, anthropologist Barbara Harrell-Bond accused the UNHCR of fuelling the 'dependency syndrome' of refugees (Harrell-Bond 1986, 151)" (Glasman 2017, 348).

turn constructs refugeeness differently [122] and brings people to experience it differently.

INTEGRATING REFUGEES INTO THE JOB-MARKET: THE SOLUTION TO ALL PROBLEMS?

As argued by Scott-Smith (2016), the innovation turn in humanitarianism that 'officially' started in 2009, "replaces the classical principles of humanitarian action with a distinctive new ideology, […] 'humanitarian neophilia." This new ideology "designates a distinctive approach to aid, which combines an optimistic faith in the possibilities of technology with a commitment to the power of markets" (2230). In his work, Scott-Smith shows how such an approach promotes "a vision of self-reliant subjects rather than strong nation-states realising substantive socioeconomic rights" (2229). Today's refugee regime has taken a 'step further' in committing to "the power of markets" by increasingly emphasising the integration of refugees in the job-market as a solution to their 'problems'. Most livelihoods programmes today are designed and directed towards economic initiatives, and part of academia and the media seems to generally commend this and provide further support to this shift. For Scott-Smith (2016, 2238) one of the main problems of the obsession with innovations in humanitarianism was/is the focus on "flashy technologies" and not on "time-consuming improvements." The latter aiming at "reducing complex humanitarian problems, which need political engagement and have a significant social angle, to the provision of material good." It may be said that the most recent preoccupation I am

122. When studying the 'innovation movement' within humanitarianism, Scott-Smith looks at the changes in the lexicon (e.g., from beneficiaries to consumers, basic essentials to humanitarian goods), and argues that "the change in language is revealing, as it reframes the issues and paves the way for a different kind of intervention" (2016, 2235).

looking at – giving refugees' a job or loans, studying refugees' economies, and other similar projects/schemes – aims at tackling more long-term situations, by providing refugees with opportunities and sometimes skills that will help them in the long run and not only giving them 'flashy' material assistance that responds to urgent needs. Whether this is a "time-consuming improvement" remains to be seen but I have my doubts, which I now turn to look at.

This 'neoliberal turn' therefore tackles not only, or mainly, material goods' provision, but livelihoods programmes and thus also 'solutions' to (protracted) refugee situations. It goes beyond the realm of the pure material assistance. This approach can be understood as addressing long-term issues that refugees may face, but I believe it focuses excessively on the action 'getting a job' and not sufficiently on other dimensions that are crucial in arriving to the stage of 'getting a job'. For example, it does not sufficiently consider that unemployment in both the formal and informal sectors is extensive in Burkina Faso (the youth being the most affected by it), and that not everyone is 'fit to work' – not only because some are affected by physical or mental disabilities, but for other legitimate reasons too. This move in humanitarianism similarly does not address structural regimes of inequalities that play an extremely important role in how a person experiences her displacement. It puts the emphasis on something else and focuses only on this something else: access to the (job)market. The only rights refugees seem to need to solve their problems are related to market access,[123] as if job opportunities will automatically follow. The following extract from Scott-Smith's article (2016, 2239), on a similar reflection about all-solving innovations, expresses nicely what I am alluding to:

123. Within the 'refugees' livelihoods' literature, it seems that some positive ideas are being introduced; for example Wake and Barbelet (2017) and Easton-Calabria and colleagues (2017), highlight that understanding refugees' livelihoods purely in economic terms is not enough nor entirely relevant.

> "The 'wearable dwelling' and the bag made from dinghy-rubber can tackle human suffering at only the most superficial level. The novelty evaporates as soon as one considers the sheer scale of the crisis. Like Sprinkles or the Liter of Light, these tiny improvements are wrapped in hyperbole. They might make it easy to carry belongings on an arduous and dangerous journey to asylum in Europe, but they still leave refugees taking a dangerous journey without protection or safe passage."

The contemporary emphasis put on economic self-sufficiency by the refugee regime, in particular in the case I study, has two main outcomes for/from UNHCR: 1) durable solutions are increasingly conceived in terms of 'access to the market', and 2) it puts the responsibility of 'succeeding' on the refugees themselves, discarding part of UNHCR and the state's commitments and obligations. To start explaining why this recent trend in humanitarianism deserves more critical attention, I now move to Burkina Faso and share a few examples of programmes that follow the above logic – making refugees economically self-reliant; and providing them the means to enter the market. As noted previously, it is important to remember that every Malian citizen in Burkina Faso has the right to work due to ECOWAS treaties, thus this right is independent of her refugee status.

I also want to stress that I am not critiquing actual desires and aspirations of refugees to be economically self-sufficient, rather, I want to analyse and question the broader macro-economically fashioned humanitarianism, making explicit why it is problematic at the conceptual level, and anchoring that critique in the local context, practices, and discourses that I studied. This allows me to show how such

interventions participate in creating hierarchies of refugeeness and inequalities among the refugees.

WHO AND WHAT CAN BE 'SUPPORTED' IN BURKINA FASO

In 2014, UNHCR Burkina Faso in consultation with CONAREF and the Malian government, started thinking about repatriation, as the security and stability situation in Mali was improving slightly. Plans were made for introducing facilitated and possibly organised return, with a sub-regional plan for the reintegration of refugees in Mali also created. In May 2014, the 'Second battle of Kidal' took place, showing the continuing lack of control of the Malian army and government over its disputed territories. It appeared clear that the organised return and reintegration plan could not move forward. What went forward was the introduction, later on in 2014, of the facilitated return measure. A senior UNHCR staff member, when recounting this, said that it was at that point, after the Kidal battle, that they realised they "had to very quickly change of strategy to allow them [Malian refugees] to continue being here: it was absolutely needed to help them to take charge of themselves and be self-sufficient, we needed to train them" (Ouagadougou, 14/04/2016). By conducting a socio-economic survey with the refugees, UNHCR tried to find out "what they do and what they like to do already, because only training them on that and promoting that would work towards self-sufficiency." The program 'Seeds for solution' was implemented with the goal of supporting refugees' self-sufficiency and

empowerment, by starting two projects promoting "the development of value chains in Burkina by integrating refugees into these existing chains." [124]

Showcase programmes for the refugee camps

The IKEA foundation funded this program with a contribution of almost 5 million of Euros; one project aimed at developing/'supporting' dairy production and marketability, while another one supported crafters in their production of jewels and other objects, with the goal of selling them on the global market. The first one was motivated by the fact (according to UNHCR) that the capital Malian refugees value and care for most is cattle. Yet, to be profitable and not only used for self-consumption and as 'savings', cattle must be in good health and have enough food, so it will produce good quality milk. The project supported refugees with material, vaccinations, skill trainings and so on. "It was necessary to form the refugees to become mini-entrepreneurs. We selected some refugees [when I asked how, the person could not answer] and, as pacific cohabitation is needed and wanted, some locals as well" (refugees for 60% and locals for 40%; UNHCR senior officer, 14/04/2016). This senior officer explained how they trained those refugees to collect milk, send it to the labs, pasteurise it, bottle it and then sell it. As they followed international hygienic standards in producing the milk, it was then sold to UNHCR, who distributed it to 2178 children under 59 months in the two camps' canteens. They

124. See Appendix 4 for the transcription of the presentation video made about this program; these projects did not directly concern my informants, nevertheless are very representative of what I am questioning. For example, the point on the language used made by Scott-Smith (2016, 2235) is very much present – e.g. "the artisan project is also very market oriented […] they already produce very lovely objects so we actually [...] tweak the products, to improve the design, the marketability, and then get it out in to the international market." Or "seeds for solutions is opening our eyes, showing alternative procedures that might be more profitable," a refugee said. The focus of these programmes is on "building their assets to improving their business skills." This discourse is provided with a paternalistic tone: "you see a lot of smiley faces, with milk moustaches [and the video shows a child with a milk moustache], the women are all very happy about it!"

did this program in Dori and Djibo, where the camps are.[125] The interviewed humanitarian could not remember whether it concerned 1,000 or 1,500 people, but a recent report noted that it allowed for 151 milk micro-enterprises to be opened (see Appendix 5). The refugees' self-sufficiency now depends entirely on that mode of production and commodity, with groups specialised in one task of the value chain. UNHCR is now trying to find new funding for this programme, which ended in December 2017, as many of their goals were not reached. The more important and worrying one being the fact that the only buyers of the milk produced is UNHCR itself.

The other project aimed at promoting refugees self-sufficiency in Burkina Faso was focused on crafting and concerned 2,000 refugees in Burkina Faso (but none from Bobo-Dioulasso to my knowledge). “We [UNHCR] want to train them to allow them to produce stuff of better quality and sell them internationally, in Geneva too!” A senior UNHCR officer explained me how the best among the selected craftsmen were also doing additional training, in collaboration with Afrika Tiss, a French NGO, where

> “they learn even more techniques and especially modern design and also to do other things that just jewellery or boxes.[126] It's an exchange, because the French new graduates [who came with Afrika Tiss] are also learning from the refugees. I went to see the

125. To implement this project, UNHCR commissioned Trickle Up, “a non-profit international development organization that empowers people living in extreme poverty.” Trickle Up assists UNHCR by “integrating the Graduation Approach into these projects;” some aspects of this approach are: market analysis, consumption support, capacity building, asset building, cash or capital grants, access to credit, monitor participants' progress and tailor project activities to the needs of individual participant through coaching. “In addition, building in a savings component strengthens refugees' resilience and provides more economic security during times of scarcity” (http://trickleup.org/portfolio/milk-and-artisan-value-chains-for-refugees-in-burkina-faso. Accessed 11/11/2017).

126. 'Just' jewellery and leather/wooden boxes are what most Malian create and then sell to locals in their communities or to the very few tourists in the country.

> place where they do it and I was touched, very touched by the beautiful work they're doing. […] It's formidable what they're doing! They'll be self-sufficient."

UNHCR's agreements with Afrika Tiss also ensure the marketisation of these products, by distributing them in the international market. Between 2015 and 2017, the cumulated sales of these products amounted to around €30,000. It is unclear if this project, which also officially ended in December 2017, will have more chances of continuing than the milk-production one.

'Second class' projects for the city

These projects did not concern refugees in Bobo-Dioulasso and nothing of that scale was implemented there. I was told that some of the urban refugees received income generating activities (IGA) before I was there; these usually consisted of a lump sum to be used as investment for an 'economic activity', with no requirement to return the sum at a later date. Most of my informants who remembered or received it, said that IGA were distributed by TDH in 2014, while one person thought it was IEDA who provided them in 2014. UNHCR's official documents[127] state that the IGA program started in June 2013 and was distributed to 237 women and 94 men – a total of 331 individuals – living in either Goudoubo (one of the camps in the north), Sag-Nioniongo (the camp outside the capital that was closed in 2015), or Bobo-Dioulasso. Note that the total refugee population in these three locations was 15,493 (though including children and elderly). These IGAs varied between XOF40,000 and 100,000 depending on the activity; the activities listed as supported were sewing, traditional

127. As the staff changes regularly, for every question I have that concerns before 2015 I am referred to documents; see UNHCR BR 07/2013, 09/2013, 08/2014.

soap making, spices, Tuareg crafts, petty trading, sculpture, clothes trading, and cattle. These grants were distributed in two different phases, half before the start of the activity and the other half when the activity was being carried out, which provided proof that the investment was actually being used for the designated activity. In September 2013, 50 additional individuals in Bobo-Dioulasso received IGA provided by IEDA. In 2013 and 2014, IEDA supported 533 women with IGA, "which have offered lasting solutions" (IEDA 2014). Similarly, UNHCR (08/2014) says the goal of IGA for women is to "increase the income of the beneficiaries and make women financially less dependent on men."

What I want to convey with these numbers is that a very low number of individuals in general, and in Bobo-Dioulasso in particular, were 'selected' to be supported, either by receiving the IGA or taking part in the 'long-term' value-chain programs. Even if UNHCR and its partner organisations see these monetized support programmes as key to long lasting solutions, they are doing it for a very small proportion of refugees. This increases inequalities – in receiving support and accessing the job market – among refugee populations, and does not address why these groups need economic support or jobs in the first place, or why they might not be able to get those. The aim of my work is not to show how such programmes can be effective or ineffective, but rather to bring to light a growing trend. A trend that perceives 'entering the market' as a sufficient solution for protracted situations and making 'refugee entrepreneurs' the new 'ideal refugees'. But before digging into this point, I wanted to share my informants' thoughts on IGA.

Very few of them received such support – as I just said the numbers of people receiving it in total and in Bobo-Dioulasso in particular were low, with only 5 of my informants being able to talk to me about this form of support. Of those who did,

Ismail explained to me how for his wife and himself, the IGA they received in 2014 was quite useful, in that it allowed his wife to get some initial stock of fabrics to start a small petty trading activity, which she is still doing currently. However, other informants were less positive about this. Maryam recalled she also received it “at some point, but it was very little and it's not enough to start a proper business. If there's no money there is no trade” (18/03/2016). She stressed how agencies were saying they would support them in business activities, yet with the amounts of money one would receive, nothing serious could be done. Betty told me how she only knew of one refugee who managed to use that money to do something 'durable', in that she used it to start up a kiosk/*maquis*, that seems to still be open. For herself, on the other hand, “it didn't last long,” and this is because “often the women who get them use that money to either eat or buy stuff” (14/10/2015). She was in that category. Interestingly, Alassane, told me how he believes that for men, it is harder to get IGA as the agencies think that men are thought to “betray” more easily, “meaning that if they'd find themselves with a large sum of money they could be tempted to abandon their families and just leave, while women do not do that” (27/05/2016). A similar point that was brought to my attention by an informant is that IGA mostly go to women and are for 'small things', it does not allow for 'big investment'.

I want to make a brief reflection linking the more grounded experiences and desires of economic self-sufficiency just discussed and the broader macro-economy tendencies followed by UNHCR. IGA are mostly directed towards women, with the aim of making them financially less dependent on men. As we will see in the next chapter, 'financial dependence' of women to men or their families is not an isolated aspect, rather it intersects with other unequal structures making them 'dependent'. Nevertheless, the point I want to make here is that sensitisation training programmes

are run in camps and for urban refugees, which talk about women's rights, women empowerment, and SGBV. This is because, in those contexts ('Africa') it is assumed – and often rightly so – that women are caught up in power relations that undermine them, their rights, and their safety. Such trainings, plus IGA directed to women, are not sufficient nor appropriate to change said dynamics. Additionally, if such 'small-scale investments' are directed towards woman, this seems to suggest that they can only – or should only – handle small businesses.[128] This is one way in which the humanitarian programmes/interventions I discuss here can reinforce differences and resulting inequalities, by only promoting certain types of 'work' as appropriate for women and others for men, and therefore reifying a differentiation between gendered roles.[129]

Going back to the empirical problems I observed, additional IGA were promised to the refugees in Bobo-Dioulasso in early 2016, to support them after the end of food and cash assistance and push them towards self-sufficiency but, as I will explain later, these never came. The more time that passed after food and cash assistance ended, the clearer it was for a CONAREF officer how those programmes would have been useful, not to work towards self-sufficiency, rather to ease debts. "Now people have been waiting for four months for it… how can we know they won't use those money for something else? Because some people, waiting for it, got debts and so on"

128. See Sukarieh 2016 for how different groups – based on socio-economic class – were targeted with different programmes/amounts/goals in the micro-credit programmes she studies; she interestingly tackle this issue with Bourdieu's conceptualisation of class developed in Distinction (1984). In itself, Sukarieh's argument and the point I make show how these kinds of interventions do reify socio-economic (and patriarchal and racial) inequalities.

129. On a more theoretical note, a number of critical feminist anthropologists have shown over the years how global capital is intrinsically patriarchal, sexist, classist, (neo)colonial, and racist (see Bear et al. 2015). It is therefore counterproductive to aim for women's 'liberation' or 'empowerment' through measures that insert women in those systems, without challenging that same system. Tsing (2009) shows how differences (gender, ethnicity, nationality, religion, and citizenship status) and the linked inequalities and hierarchies, are crucial for the workings of supply chain global capitalism; intersectional discriminations and differences fuel global capitalism's expansion, and its forms and expressions such as supply chains.

(29/03/2016). The long-term use of a small amount of money will not be the priority if daily life and surviving is what matters, the money will be used to patch whatever needs patching in that moment. Yet UNHCR does not seem to accept this and is therefore unable or unwilling to give 'complete agency' to the refugees in their economic strategies.

In a subsequent visit in December 2017, I found out that a new 'programme' was starting in Bobo-Dioulasso, involving between 10 and 20 women. CREDO would reimburse the expenses of materials bought to then be re-sold, notably fabrics bought in bulk. This way, the agency could be reassured that the money would not be just 'eaten out', since the women needed to re-sell whatever they bought in the first place, as such a large amount of fabric would not be used only for personal consumption. It was not though sufficient to simply go to CREDO's office and say 'I bought this amount of that', one needed to provide receipts. This, in addition to not being a long-term solution for the refugees, has/leads to two main problematic aspects: firstly, those I know who were included in the program asked for help from one of the laison people, to find a formal retailer and seller. They also needed help to deal with receipts and similar formal processes and also the filling out of required forms. Supporting his fellow refugees is part of the liaison people tasks, yet him making those steps for them did not correspond to helping 'empower' women and making them independent from men. Secondly, such an approach promotes “big traders” in the West African context, as the receipts demanded by UNHCR are only used by bigger and more formalised traders (mostly run by foreign men, at least in Bobo-Dioulasso). This comes at the expenses of smaller forms of commerce and thus already more disadvantaged traders.

Another problematic point about the way IGA have been thought about and implemented in Bobo-Dioulasso, concerns the decision about who would be allocated with one: the liaison people provide the agencies with lists of names of interested people. There are tensions and asymmetrical power relations among the individuals and groups in the refugee communities, which can play a role in who ends up being in those lists and who does not. This is the case, even though on paper UNHCR, CONAREF, or the other agencies in charge at that moment have the final call, supposedly by checking those names against socio-economic surveys they carry out. In June 2016, one of the liaison person was asked to make a list of people interested in IGA; a Tuareg informant of mine was quite annoyed that only that person was asked to make a list – that person being a 'black Malian' – and feared that he would automatically discriminate against light skinned Malians. Another informant of mine, himself a 'black Malian' but from another ethnic group than the one in charge of making the list tried to mediate between the two, but ultimately told me how he did not understand why Tuareg are always complaining about something.

It seems like UNHCR was very invested in the 'big projects', supporting self-sufficiency through these, but did not really make an effort, or believe in supporting smaller scale projects/ideas, or try to understand what would have been more helpful and useful according to the refugees themselves, and how to implement that in the urban setting. As an additional example, UNHCR, at the 'end of assistance meeting', insisted that they wanted to hear from refugees about ideas that would help them become economically self-reliant. Sidi, a business man and wealthy refugee, thus sent a project to them, detailing a plan of buying three tricycles as a cooperative project for 16 refugees, where everyone would have tasks (either management, drivers, mechanics, administration, receiving calls from clients or booking the tricycles) to

carry out according to their skills. I saw the business plan, I have a copy of it. There were all the details that UNHCR may have needed to see if it financially worked – one of the businesses Sidi runs is actually with tricycles (that you rent for deliveries and transports to clients or companies) and he thus based the business plan for the 'refugees' tricycles' on his numbers and experience. Sidi's project was aimed in particular at young unemployed men and women within the refugee community. This idea was coming from the refugees themselves, in contrast to the Seed for Solutions programmes that were 'proposed' by the agencies based on perceived refugees' needs and desires. "They just told me it was not accepted, as when UNHCR was asking for money apparently they didn't finance any project in Burkina" (16/03/2016). This is the explanation he got for his project not being financed, but it did not satisfy him, as funding was avaiable for other programmes or interventions (like the sensitisation campaigns discussed before) and, more importantly, the agencies had asked the refugees to propose precisely that kind of well-devleoped and detailed project if they wanted continued support.

The only "program" for self-sufficiency that was actually implemented in Bobo-Dioulasso in 2016 was the possibility for refugees to ask for a bank loan, where UNHCR would be the guarantor. This was explained to some of the block chiefs in a meeting in May 2016. Alassane, who attended it, told me that UNHCR and CONAREF had asked before the meeting for a list of around 100 people who would be interested in micro-credit.[130] They then explained that the people on the list needed to be already involved in serious petty-trading or other business activities, as "they need to see you already do something and know how to do it," otherwise the bank would be reluctant to give them a loan. When I discussed this opportunity with my

130. There is a vast critical literature on projects based on micro-credits, micro-loans, or micro-finance in development contexts. See Elyachar 2002, 2005; Li 2007; Sukarieh 2016.

informants, it was clear that not one of them would apply for it, and for various reasons. Importantly, besides the mentioned Sidi, not one of my informants knew how to write a business plan that would be accepted by a bank and few if any had previous 'recorded' – on paper – experience of business work, without which it is much harder to get a bank loan. Petty trading in the informal economy is hard to record. Many do not know how to write and most do not know how to use computers. On top of this, it was unlikely that the refugees would have the negotiating skills to make sure that the interest rates were good and that they were signing a decent contract without previous training or experience. This 'programme', where from my understanding UNHCR would sign the paper to say they would be a guarantee for that person – a sort of micro-loan programme outsourced to a private bank, but just for people who already have some business experience – helps those from upper socio-economic classes and with a certain educational background.[131]

Self-reliance programmes, at least as they have been done in Burkina Faso, with their market-orientated ethos, are therefore unjust and exclusionary by design and ideology, at both the macro and micro level. On the one side, they are exclusionary as they always concern, and thus 'help', a limited number of refugees. On the other side, as I just showed, they can reinforce unequal access to opportunities for people already excluded from such domains. A senior UNHCR officer, even if publicly defending such programmes, when in a face to face setting was very open about the fact that IGA only works for certain kinds of people and not for others. I was told that "even if we give them IGA in form of cash, if there's no training they'll just eat out all the money" (Ouagadougou 14/04/2016). I asked whether they provided trainings for

131. In the context of the Seed for Solutions, they did open up various literacy centres in the camps/nearby villages (UNHCR BF 2015). Bartsch underlined in 2004 (12) how microfinance projects are beneficial only for some refugees, who already are "endowed with business acumen and, often enough, sufficient resources to sustain themselves."

refugees in the urban setting – or even in camps but not through programmes like the Seed for Solutions – and the person told me "it's not our role, they should do it on their own, there are agencies for that, also because we cannot give them a diploma with a UNHCR stamp and pretend it's a valid one." That person then explained to me that there was going to be a 'mission' (that is how they call them) in which the person in charge of urban refugees would come, talk to the refugees, and decide how to help them. That did not happen during the remaining three months of my fieldwork.

Another livelihood/self-reliance project (I do not have the official document to know in which terms it was defined) that was undertaken in Bobo-Dioulasso, but which happened after I left my fieldwork, was the possibility for 10 refugees in Bobo-Dioulasso to take the driving license course, which would have been paid by UNHCR.[132] This seemed like a different/positive opportunity, in that, as I will discuss in the next chapter, transport constraints can have a significant impact on my informants' daily lives. I felt that this was not another openly 'let's put refugees to work' project. Yet, with insight, it is once again a project only for a very small number of people and, secondly, it is only for refugees belonging to certain socio-economic classes, as someone who does not have the means to get a small motorcycle or even a bike, cannot really put a car driving license to good use. Unless it is a requirement from the person's employer who provides her with a car/van and demands a driving license as a condition for obtaining employment.

These examples from Burkina Faso therefore show how the emphasis on economic livelihoods (and access to the job market as fundamental) is more a polished narrative than a working practice; and how it is problematic as it tends to

132. In a visit in November 2016 an informant firstly informed me about this as being a rumour; he was later selected for it, as he told me over a phone call, and received his driving license in September 2017. 9 refugees in total applied for it in Bobo-Dioulasso, but in the end only 4 were given that opportunity, as my interlocutors told me in December 2017.

support refugees already, or at least partially, inserted in either the formal or informal economy. These findings also reiterate the need to separate the actual desires of the refugees to find an employment and the broader claims and rationales behind ideas such as the economic zones and larger economic self-sufficiency programmes, as there is a great discrepancy between these ideals and the reality. Additionally, giving someone the right to work does not automatically guarantee employment and, importantly, does not change structural regimes of inequality currently so prevalent in our world.

The way these programmes are thought of and implemented in Burkina Faso will not provide durable solutions for Malian refugees. For the main livelihood project in Burkina Faso, Seed for Solutions, some important concerns/aspects, like literacy and accounting courses, were thought of and integrated in it, but when economic self-reliance concerned people not involved in this showcasing/exemplary project, those aspects were forgotten. Additionally, the only time a project in line with neoliberal ideals was proposed by the refugees themselves, funding was not available. Similarly, as I realised various times in my research in Burkina since 2013, both in the camp and urban setting, a refugee selling part of her aid food or goods that are distributed by aid organisations, or refugees capitalizing on their refugee status (see next chapter), are not seen as acceptable ways of 'doing business'. In this latter case refugees are 'abusers', not 'good entrepreneurs'.[133]

These observations do not change the reality that in Burkina Faso, IGA that were supposed to start in Bobo-Dioulasso in 2016 were justified as being about durable solutions, “it would have allowed people to get into business and get integrated” (CONAREF officer, 18/05/2016). Similarly, the Seed for Solutions

133. See Fresia 2004 for a detailed study on similar dynamics, and refugees' 'frauds'.

programme was not only launched in Burkina Faso, but in other countries as well, and framed as a solution to refugees' hardship.

> "UNHCR is intensifying its pursuit of comprehensive strategies for all populations of concern. Multi-year solutions strategies are being field tested, and additional funds have been committed to the 'Seeds for Solutions' initiative, supporting longer-term comprehensive solutions plans with a wide range of partners. UNHCR is also increasingly linking its work on solutions to broader development programmes. Close partnerships with governments and with development actors are critical to solving existing situations and to preventing future emergencies from becoming protracted." (UNHCR 2015a)

'WORKING' AS A DURABLE SOLUTION: THE WAY FORWARD?

Cole argues that analyses of durable solutions have often omitted "how shifts in the provision of durable solutions have been facilitated and accompanied by changes in the significance and meanings attached to refugees" (2016, 17). Although I am not doing a semiotic study like hers, I do take up on this, in particular the argument that "[f]or each desired durable solution, interested parties can thus create an 'ideal' refugee to justify its application." The 'ideal refugee' in Cole's work is understood in a more dynamic way than in Fiddian-Qasmiyeh's book (2014b), with Cole explaining how "the 'ideal' refugee is historically and contextually determined" (2016, 17). I take a different path in showing this and include in it how refugees themselves participate in this 'making', thus also building on Andersson's (2014) and Hacking's (1999) work.

In order to understand how and why I talk about that in the next chapters, I need to stress how labour and capital investment, in the current refugee regime, seem to be thought of as a solution to protracted refugee situations. Aid agencies today expect refugees to be good entrepreneurs and become self-reliant by finding jobs and/or starting businesses. I am not talking about an official durable solution; however, local integration, which is one such durable solution, is increasingly understood as access to the market for refugees, and in one particular instance, my final meeting with UNHCR staff, this was made very clear.

On July 13 2016, I took an early bus from Bobo-Dioulasso that after six long hours brought me to Ouagadougou. I only had two weeks left of fieldwork, and I wanted to spend as much time as possible with my informants and friends in Bobo-Dioulasso, not to try gather even more data, but just to enjoy their company and the discussions we had. Yet I also really wanted to meet with UNHCR staff members to share some preliminary observations, mostly about concerns I had regarding the situation for urban refugees in Bobo. I hence decided that I would not allow myself to stay in the capital more than one night, which meant I had to take the bus the morning of the meeting. I arrived there slightly tired, but very eager to get into the discussion. I knew that all the main staff (all the people involved in projects and not doing only administrative and bureaucratic work) had been invited to take part in the meeting, and that at least four were going to be there, including the national representative, with whom I really wanted to talk.

Once in UNHCR's offices, I was asked to wait with the national representative's assistant, as the representative was still in a meeting. I was kindly offered coffee and water, and had a chat with her assistant. After about 40 minutes, all the phones that I could hear from the assistant's office rang, and a voice announced that staff members

expected to attend the meeting with me should go to the conference room as it was about to start. There were going to be six members of staff, including the national representative – the only woman. When she arrived, the representative introduced me and thanked me for being there with them. I was asked to give an overview of what I saw and the information gathered during my time in Bobo-Dioulasso, and we would then discuss together the concerns raised. The first one to react at the end of my presentation was the representative, who thanked me for all the insights and then said that she had to recognise that they (UNHCR) were victims of their own mistakes. She said this in relation to the fact that when assistance for Malian refugees started, they should not have given assistance to urban refugees, as usually that is not something UNHCR and WFP would do. She thus brought to the plate a 'thorny issue', concerning the way things where done at the beginning. “We should have done better though, making them [the refugees] understand better the fact that theoretically they should never had that help, it was extra,” so that they would have better understood the way they stopped it. She did recognise that if some refugees were facing additional hardship and new challenges following the end of assistance, they were responsible for it. They promised me they would act on some of the issues I raised, telling me the least they could do was be honest and communicative with the refugees in Bobo-Dioulasso about what was not going to happen: provide them with transitional aid. That information never officially got passed on to the refugees. What all UNHCR employees stressed, often in relation to the various points I made, was the budget problem they were facing.

A member of the staff made a pertinent remark, pointing out how my insights, concerning how most refugees where well integrated and communication between UNHCR and the refugees was not working at all, were not useful to them if I did not

have operational advice on how to implement changes. The divide between academia and the practitioner-world felt huge to me in that moment. He did not specify in which way I could better analyse my data or use my data to make them useful for UNHCR. The representative returned to this issue later on and when she spoke I felt that what she was taking issue with in relation to my research was its purely ethnographic and qualitative methodology. The representative concluded saying that it would be interesting to show concretely (meaning, with numbers and not only by me saying 'I observed that…') how the refugees integrate and participate in the local life and local economy, this in turn would enable them to advocate with the local authorities to allow refugees to stay in the cities, and with donors to make it a durable solution.

I extrapolate a few important points from these discussions: 1) the easiest way to 'show concretely' how refugees participate in the local life would mean showing how they participate in the local economy, as no other potential index of 'participation in local life' was mentioned by the staff. 2) There is no need for them to advocate with the host government, in that unless a person infringes ECOWAS and OUA treaties or national laws, Burkina Faso cannot force Malians out, and therefore these refugees automatically have the right to work in Burkina Faso, as noted in the previous chapter. 3) Most Burkinabè of low-middle and lower classes work in the informal economy (therefore also do not pay taxes), as do most of the refugees. From what I observed in Bobo-Dioulasso, informal work does not seem to be an acceptable proof of participating in the local economy and life.

Additionally, the lack of recognition towards the value of qualitative and non-standardised and quantified studies seemed to be recurrent at UNHCR BF. Indeed, a UNHCR officer told me how they were currently doing a survey in the camps in the

north of the country, with the goal of understanding who still needed assistance and who did not. The project manager in charge originally made a plan for a two year in-depth longitudinal survey in the camps, in order to understand the livelihood dynamics better, and to better understand the variety of factors that could affect households ability to become independent from aid or not. It would have cost $100,000. Someone in the hierarchy said that that was unconceivable, that a one time survey, which they had to carry out in maximum of six months and could only cost $10,000 was all they needed to understand those dynamics. My informant, after saying that, told me "we'll end up having people who don't deserve it receiving help, and those needing it not having it…" (14/04/2016, Ouagadougou). This reluctance to trust or acknowledge as evidence studies that are not entirely quantified and standardised, cost more (but could clearly make them save more funding in the long run, as my informant said), and take longer, cannot be the single blame of the national representative of Burkina Faso, nor her office.

It seems that information needs to be quantified in today's refugee regime for it to count, in terms of research but also programme implementation.[134] Furthermore, refugees' integration is directly linked with being employed. To me (and this is influenced by literature but also my previous experiences and backgrounds), integration is so more complex than simply gaining access to the job market. In durable solutions' terms, local integration is meant as *de jure*, meaning acquiring citizenship of the host country (vs. *de facto*[135]) Yet, with much focus on job-market access as a durable solution, the importance of re-establishing the political links of

134. The need for UNHCR and other organisations to be accountable, follow standardised procedures and provide numbers, particular for their donors, is not new, it was already highlighted in the 1990s; see Harrell-Bond et al. 1992 and Scott-Smith 2014. But the emphasis on standardisation and accountability seems to be constantly growing, and together with practices like results-based management, they can be seen as characteristics of an increasingly neoliberalised refugee regime.
135. See Hovil 2014.

refugees with the state (the basis/aim of durable solutions) currently seems less important than accessing employment in Burkina Faso. What I find problematic in this approach is also its outcome in relation to refugeeness, and particularly the construction of the 'ideal refugee' as 'the neoliberal refugee'.

THE PROBLEM WITH 'WORKING' AS A DURABLE SOLUTION

According to Scott-Smith (2016), one of the main effects of the humanitarian innovation movement is "to undermine the state by suggesting that technology and the market are the best way to provide basic services" (2237), and that what should be promoted is "the need for individuals to help themselves rather than relying on the state. Humanitarian innovation is just the latest example of this trend" (2238). The contemporary emphasis on economic livelihoods programmes and economic self-reliance undertaken by UNHCR, and the public-private partnerships in humanitarianism[136] – the 'global compact' and the idea of special economic zones for refugees being the apex of this – can also be seen as part of this framework. In it, the 'official' durable solutions are not the only priority anymore.

In addition to what Krause (in Easton-Calabria et al. 2017) denounced as a move – self-reliance – to legitimise cut in aid, such a move takes away responsibility from the state and UNHCR to provide certain services and rights. These programmes put the responsibility to 'succeed in durability' on the refugees themselves, by imposing on them the making of their own durable solution through employment. The solution to a refugee crisis is in such cases re-defined in developmental and economic terms, thus creating distance from the highly political issue it is, in both how it happens (the

136. See also Gunewardena and Schuller 2008, 4.

displacement or migration) in the first place and the way to find solutions by themselves.[137] By this I am not saying that a realm characterised as economically centred is non-political, rather that it might appear as such and, importantly, it might appear as an objective realm, where political and social relations are concealed from it. As Ticktin says in relation to the similar idea of apolitical, there are political choices and configurations "that make us understand something as apolitical" (2011, 14).[138] The politics of humanitarianism is thus also hidden behind this economic rationale;[139] the politics and relations that make it and the power differentials that run it are concealed. The *homo economicus* is rational in her choices and decisions, if she fails it is her fault, not the historicity, institutions, structures and socio-cultural tendencies in which she is caught.

The shift of responsibility in succeeding in one's refugeehood is already perceivable in Burkina Faso. For instance, a senior UNHCR officer (14/04/2016) told me that "[s]omeone that lives in the city doesn't have the same status as those living in camps, who don't have any chance to move around, find a job, etc. We gave them *all* the possibilities…" I thus asked whether she/he meant in the sense that if refugees

137. Li's work clearly shows the apolitical character of programmes based on a "will to improve." She builds on Rose's idea (2004, 33) of a "domain to be governed as an intelligible field with specifiable limits and particular characteristics," which Li conceptualises as 'rendering technical'. This author gives as a main example of the nonpolitical central dimension of the 'rendered technical wills to improve', the fact that in such programmes more emphasis goes on the "capacity [and incapacities] of the poor than on the practices through which one social group impoverishes another" (Li 2007, 7). She shows that these depoliticized wills cannot reach their goals precisely because, by being depoliticized, they miss a part of the diagnosis. I argue that a commodification approach – and the idea of commodity fetishism – allows us to highlight why and how parts of the diagnosis are missing.

138. See Ticktin (2011, 19-20 in particular) for discussions about politics and/vs political. In her book she looks at the question of the relationship "between morality and politics to inquire about situations where the moral order becomes a *primary* order; that is where the drive to do what is moral, distinguishing itself from politics and the political – although not power – takes the upper hand in forms of government" (20). She shows how the danger of this tendency is precisely "that in pretending to be outside power [what is moral], 'unarmed' power is wielded without acknowledging it and therefore often without accountability." In my case, it is the economic logic that becomes the seemingly 'unarmed power'.

139. That 'depoliticisation' goes with humanitarianism and its interventions is not a novelty; my approach highlights this continuous feature from a perspective focused on its 'neoliberal' rationality and through a heuristic use of 'commodification'.

still wanted food and cash assistance they could move to the camp, and she/he said yes. “But you didn't give them the possibility to remain [in the city] and be helped 'transitioning', correct?” I added, and, as mentioned above, she/he said that anyhow, just giving the IGA without training would not help, and as providing training is not what they do, that would be useless. Underlying these projects is the idea that entering the job market is a durable solution, but then agencies like UNHCR do not provide support through these programmes for everyone, or they do it in ways that will structurally and durably not work.

I want to reiterate that I am in no way opposing supporting refugees to access job opportunities, what I am concerned with is what this turn, or change, implicates at a deeper level – both in practical terms but also more theoretical ones. The current tendencies of the refugee regime discussed in this chapter indicate an increase in the material assistance (material in terms of material provision, which is currently more often cash provision in a variety of forms: cash grants; IGA; microloans) work done by the Agency, and a decrease in activities related more broadly to the protection mandate of UNHCR and signatory states. Scott-Smith underlined that despite some of the terminology and approaches within the innovation turn and ideology in humanitarianism provide the refugees with more agency and depict a “more active, less dependent humanitarian subject” (2016, 2235), this was the same intention of rights-based movements and vocabulary, advocating for transforming “recipients into holders of rights” (Ibid.). Giving some refugees a job should not be the only way to make refugees into agents, and more emphasis should be put on rights and principles – at the core of refugee law – than on 'putting refugees to work', the latter being what seems the main concern in Burkina Faso nowadays. Additionally, and on a more theoretical level, in the field of anthropology of globalisation/development, scholars

showed how such neoliberal assistance programmes do not work in the long term, unless the aim is precisely to ease the state's roles in supporting its citizens (Elyachar 2005; Sukarieh 2016).

At a more general level than the examples I provided so far, the current programmes focused on economic self-sufficiency and the construction of the 'neoliberal refugee' are also exclusionary in practical ways. A variety of reasons can prevent a person from working, whether it is a mother or father with a large number of children to care for on her/his own without a support network around them, a physically and/or mentally disabled person, a mentally ill person, or someone who can only find jobs perceived as degrading and undignified in relation to her beliefs. An array of preferences, power relations, structural barriers, and identity markers can play a role in one's access, or not, to the marketplace – a very precise and idealised marketplace, as said before.[140] This approach ends up homogenizing people (and leaving out those who cannot enter in that box) by pressuring them with standardised demands and requirements, just as the 'victimising' discourse and representations of 'the refugee' did. Of course, cash-based interventions or support to enter the job market sound much better than providing purely material assistance (and, some may argue, starting a dependency cycle), in that they give refugees the choice of how to use the money and buy the supplies they want or feel appropriate to their lives. They seem more dignifying. But this only suits a small section of the larger community.

Aminata, a Malian refugee of around 80 years old, with physical disabilities and frail health, shared her household with her 10 years old granddaughter, for whom she took care of on her own. Both she and her granddaughter were categorised as a vulnerable refugees by UNHCR. After the food and cash assistance stopped, Aminata

140. Some 'jobs' or economic strategies are not deemed acceptable by entities like UNHCR – yet common in Burkina Faso.

did not receive anymore assistance, not even the help that was promised to be continued for, specifically, vulnerable refugees. This contemporary rationale of UNHCR does not work for those who do not correspond to the ideal 'neoliberal refugee' and does not take into account multiple, complex, and contextual structural barriers. Urban refugees, even those qualified as vulnerable by UNHCR itself,[141] are believed to be surrounded by job opportunities – especially in a place like Burkina Faso where Malians have the right to work – or to have someone in their close network that does have a job and thus can support them (convictions repeated to me by various humanitarians).[142] If an important portion of urban refugees whom I worked with did fit into one of the two scenarios, they did not correspond to everyone's reality, for example that of Aminata and her niece.

The idea of UNHCR helping refugees support themselves through capital investment and assets provision may seem new in the refugee regime, but it is something that has been largely 'tested' and played out in the development world, where such development policies are sold and seen "as a way for the poor to help themselves *and* the economy at the same time" (Elyachar 2002, 500). It is "a way to ensure that the poor took care of themselves, instead of relying on the state" (Ibid., 499), and UNHCR, in my case. Such policies and measures were introduced in development practice as a better solution than "the ills that globalization-as-development has wrought" (Ibid., 496), and legitimised as a "development strategy build around the needs of the people, and based on communities and small

141. The term 'vulnerability' will be discussed and questioned in greater detail in Chapter 6.
142. Elyachar did a study on how social and cultural networks are now 'used' by development programmes, highlighting how in the current "era of downsizing and globalization, when there are no jobs to be had in factories or with the state, social networks can acquire a new security value as a context in which the unemployed keep busy and keep working" (2002, 509). So what is the problem with this? It is the fact that "[w]hen infused with NGO-mediated finance, social networks can serve as a mechanism for ensuring that the poor discipline themselves" (509), and no one else, be it the state, NGOs, or UNHCR, has to do it.

enterprises" (Ibid., 496). Elyachar (2002), studying microfinance, microcredit, and microenterprise, shows how these terms and policies are not neutral, but rather have a peculiar historicity. Similarly, logics behind the 'innovation turn', or the contemporary emphasis on economic livelihood programmes and on refugees as self-sufficient and entrepreneurs, are not neutral. No representations or ideals are neutral. They mirror a certain ideology, in this case neoliberal capitalism, and power relations. A great deal of literature exists on why the notion of development as economic growth, in all its forms (from large-scale top down programmes, such as structural adjustment policies, to smaller microcredit projects, to creating more job opportunities; see Sukarieh 2016) does not and cannot work. Similarly, Rist (1996) showed how 'development', in its economic form and understanding, is the 'history of a Western belief'[143] and how its unquestioned ties with capitalism, can predict its failure. The refugee regime in its present form might be heading in a similar direction, by insisting that the best solution to refugee problems is to link them with development practices.

CONCLUSION

The so-called 'refugee problem' becomes today a matter of accessibility to the economic market instead of a political one,[144] about inequalities, injustice, conflict, exploitation and asymmetrical power relations. The refugee problem is commodified, in that its human, social, and political conditions (of production) are taken out, hidden, and replaced by market solutions. Refugees are also depicted as 'good value'

143. This is the literal translation of his book's title from French, which has been translated in the English edition as *The History of Development: from Western Origins to Global Faith*.
144. I just want to reify the point that what I mean by this is that the political is not visible, be it the political behind the displacement, but also the political in the making of refugeeness and the refugee category. See also Cole (2016, 2018) on this, highlighting how seemingly depoliticised language constructing 'the refugee' and 'the refugee problem' is indeed a political practice/action itself, in that that use of language is not anodyne.

for the host countries' economies, and the 'ideal refugee' is the one economically self-sufficient. This construction of 'the refugee', despite giving back to refugees the agency that was taken away when they were depicted as victims, is as homogenising, exclusionary, unjust and depoliticising (all features of refugees' representations that Malkki highlighted in the 1990s; see Malkki 1992 and 1996). It is a depoliticised vision in that by reproducing and constructing the refugees' hardships in the now as being due to a lack of access to jobs, does not address in any way the hows and whys refugees are refugees in the first place, and takes away the responsibilities of states and UNHCR to support them with protection, rights (unless the right concerns access to the market) and equal access to services. Discourses, refugees, programmes, and solutions – all elements participating in the construction of 'the refugee' and refugeeness – are 'objectified', meaning that "the very real power of the myriad social relations, practices, and discourses" (Gordillo 2006, 163) in refugees' lives and experiences and categorisations and movements are concealed. Human relations and power differentials are removed from the realm of refugeehood; yet people's (refugees') lives are so much more complex, and decisions that are taken are embedded within multifaceted power and structural webs.

In the conclusion of this dissertation, I will address an important issue related to the discussions of this chapter. This concerns how for over three decades, forced migration and refugee studies have focused on questioning the category 'refugee' and its representations and reproductions, to highlight the impact these discourses and practices could have on refugees' lives. Today, a part of our field of study seems mostly focused on showing how refugees have economic agency, or on providing

data on how to support them in their economic livelihoods.[145] What are the implications behind 'the neoliberal refugee', how such a figure is reproduced, what it means in terms of protection, or what impact such discourses and practices have on refugees' lives and the study of displacement in general does not seem to be a major issue for some scholars in the field. What role academic research might play in sustaining or reifying some of the inequalities engendered by the construction of 'the neoliberal refugee' is an issue I will return to at the end of this dissertation.

As refugeeness is a multitude of constructions that together make up 'the refugee', the framework of commodification processes in general, and commodity fetishism in particular, is a useful and fruitful one to rely on when studying this issue. Indeed, it allows me to understand that behind 'the refugee' there is much more that we can analyse or see. For example, that these constructions are complex; they occur in various interactions; they are products of their time and regimes of structural inequality; and finally that they in turn reinforce these regimes of structural inequality. The emphasis today put on ideals of refugees being entrepreneurs, but always according to specific terms and on labour and capital investment being a solution to displacement, is not neutral. How 'the refugee' is reproduced today depends on how 'the refugee problem' is conceptualised, as well as the conceptualisation of its proposed solutions. This also needs to be understood in light of the broader workings of the refugee regime, embodied by UNHCR in my study and thus also its funding system and its shortcomings, the way new programmes are 'naturally' excluding some and what can be the limitations of such programmes in practice. This is what I showed in this chapter. How we came to understand and

145. Of course, there are many exceptions to this, and it does not represent the majority of the field. Just to mention a few recent projects not taking that direction (in addition to other authors cited in the various chapters of this dissertation), see Mayblin 2017; Simonsen 2018; Tuckett 2018; Hyndman and Giles 2016; Kuch 2017; Monsutti 2018.

reproduce refugeeness in this way is largely unquestioned, yet the economic solution to the problems refugees are said to face today is often taken for granted. The idea that all refugees need is autonomy and opportunity, and, more importantly, the only way to get there is by integrating them in the global economy (Betts and Collier 2015), is somehow the epitome of the limitations of today's refugee regime, limitations that I discussed in the previous pages. Before moving to the next chapter, I want to share this insight from Tsing (2005, 8):

> "The knowledge that makes a difference in changing the world is knowledge that travels and mobilizes, shifting and creating new forces and agents of history in its path. However, those who claim to be in touch with the universal are notoriously bad at seeing the limits and exclusions of this knowledge. … Through friction, universals become practically effective. Yet they can never fulfil their promises of universality. Even in transcending localities, they don't take over the world."

A commodified construction and understanding of refugeeness, of what being a refugee supposedly is, and of the solutions to 'the refugee problem' have practical outcomes, as I partly showed in this chapter. Yet because I also use the idea of commodification and commodity fetishism as analytical lens, I can also see what 'escapes' this force, how it takes unexpected turns, or what is unaffected by it. The human, social, and political in refugeeness and the refugee experience, cannot be erased. The way refugees are made up also depends on how refugees respond to such labelling; and this is what I will turn to next. Commodification processes only emerge for particular refugees in particular instances; they emerge in particular local contexts in relation to the wider refugee regime and its political economy.

5.

'THE REFUGEE' NEGOTIATED: WHEN THE REFUGEE STATUS BECOMES AN ECONOMIC ASSET

Là où l'on va il faut danser comme ils dansent[146]

INTRODUCTION

> Betty: "I said Tata that we should go and get the money [for facilitated return] and then buy food."
>
> Me: "But don't they check that you go back?"
>
> Betty: "No, you go there, leave your refugee card and they give you the money." (10/12/2015)

This chapter addresses the phenomenon of the capitalization on/of the refugee status, which is particularly telling in relation to how refugees negotiate or not with their category. While I am not implying a direct causal link between the commodifying processes at work in the refugee regime discussed in Chapter 4 and this phenomenon, they are entangled. I show how those commodifying processes are taking place in somewhat unexpected ways, in very different manners and degrees. This is illustrated by a focus on the refugees' experiences and decision-making processes. When I discuss capitalization of the refugee status, I mean that following the end of humanitarian food and cash assistance in Bobo-Dioulasso and the introduction of cash grants for facilitated return, and consequent changes in the refugees' daily lives, the refugee status became an economic asset that could be liquidated under certain conditions, thus contributing to the commodification of

146. Tuareg say: Wherever you go you need to learn to dance as they do [in that place].

refugeeness. When that happens, a value of around £45[147] is assigned to refugeeness, that is, to the refugee card and everything that accompanies it: international legal and physical protection, aid, free healthcare, but also the representations and associated expectations that are often associated with the refugee label (for example, being a passive victim, being grateful for the aid received, or being apolitical). Urban refugees in Bobo-Dioulasso did not get their promised chance to capital investment after the end of the assistance; what I look at here can therefore be seen as refugees in certain situations finding their own way to get economic support, their own way of performing 'the neoliberal refugee', and the barriers some encounter in doing that.

After presenting a meaningful vignette from the life of one of my informants, I introduce and discuss the theoretical ideas that support the thinking behind this chapter and I briefly provide a discussion of UNHCR's cash grants for return/repatriation. I then explain the practicalities and processes – ending food and cash assistance, facilitated return and cash grants in Burkina Faso – coming from the humanitarian side and which I consider to be fundamental factors in making the refugee status an economic asset. The last part of the chapter focuses on the refugees' appropriation of the process of commodification (in the sense of objectifying and assigning a certain 'value' to the refugee category, embodied here by the legal status), showing how and why 'selling' the refugee status becomes an option for them. More precisely, I discuss the consequences of the humanitarian measures for the socio-economic aspects of my informants' lives, how refugees started 'calculating' whether keeping the status was still worthwhile and how these facets can intersect with other dimensions, such as gender relations: I illustrate this with another personal story. By discussing how my informants changed their attitudes towards the free healthcare

147. This value corresponds to about XOF35,000, which is the amount of the cash grant given to each refugee, by UNHCR, when she applies for return and renounces the refugee status.

provided to them, and more generally towards the support provided by UNHCR, I demonstrate how declining perceptions of worthiness and usefulness of the status ended up making it just 'a piece of plastic worth £45'.

Yet, as the two stories of Fatoumata and Diko below show, though the refugee status may be perceived as something that can be sold, this is not achievable for everyone as other factors come into play. In addition to gender and socio-economic class, race is also discussed with the story of Assadeck; these dimensions, and how they influence the ways in which my informants can and cannot negotiate with the category refugee, speak to the heterogeneity characterising societies that we tend to forget when focusing on forced migration, humanitarianism, the refugee status and category, or commodification itself. These structural dimensions and identity markers have different effects on different groups and individuals; in the context I studied, socio-economic class, gender, and race are aspects I observed as having a very influential role in my informants' lives. By partly failing to identify these dynamics and their role in the refugees' lives, the humanitarian intervention in Burkina Faso eventually created or reinforced inequalities among the people they are supposed to support. This chapter therefore also shows how commodification processes are unequally 'distributed' among the refugee population, highlighting the non-universal spread of thought-to-be-universal-and-global 'forces', like a capitalist economy, neoliberal ideals, and humanitarianism. First, however, the chapter opens with Fatoumata's story, which starts highlighting these dynamics.

FATOUMATA[148]

I was introduced to Fatoumata by her cousin, Sidi, a powerful refugee in Bobo-Dioulasso (in terms of means and position occupied within the humanitarian organisations) who was already one of my informants. Sidi, Fatoumata, and her younger brother – visiting from Ivory Coast for a couple of weeks – were sitting outside the house, on the *six mètres* under a tree, as staying inside is not recommended when it is over 40 degrees and the only fan in the house cannot work with frequent power cuts. I could see a car and a moto inside the outer-walls, and it was clearly a one-house courtyard – they seemed quite well off. Not so surprising, as Sidi was my wealthiest informant and they are part of the same extended family. I would later find out that the car was not Fatoumata's, but her brother's, and that she financially depended completely on her family, something that always bothered her.

Fatoumata was immediately warm and chatty; I knew we would get along well after the first five minutes of talking. They offered me tea, and I explained to them who I was, what I do, why I do it, what I cannot do, and so on; my classic first meeting speech. I did not pressure her with detailed questions, as we already agreed that we would meet just the two of us the following week. Fatoumata arrived in Bobo in December 2012 and is from Douentza (Mopti region). She lived her life mostly in Douentza and Sévaré (also Mopti region), where her husband is from. She arrived in Burkina with her children and her husband, though he kept moving between the Mopti region and the north of Burkina Faso – mostly Dori – for his tea trade after being granted refugee status. Before the crisis started, in addition to helping her

148. I collected Fatoumata's life history over ten meetings we had between April 2016 and July 26th; additionally, I have also been in touch with her after my fieldwork through Skype calls and Whatsapp, and met her in November 2016 and December 2017. I therefore also rely on these later exchanges when referring to her more recent happenings. Our meetings would usually happen at her place, where I would go and spend the afternoons.

husband in the shops he owned (now closed or destroyed), Fatoumata was engaged in the fabric business – she would dye and weave *bazin*. During my fieldwork, she was at times selling some soap and rice and other petty trading activities in front of her house; for some months she was also doing the *tontine*.[149] Ideally, she would want to open a kiosk in front of her house, to be more consistent in her petty trading. But that requires a significant initial investment, to buy stocks and an additional fridge (she had one in her house already, as at times she also sold drinks – *la boisson*). The WFP assistance was quite helpful for her. Even if she received financial support from her family and husband, it was never regular and she never knew how much they would send her: at times it was £20, then nothing for a month, then £100 for two months and so on. The food and cash assistance represented a solid base, and enough rice for the whole month. If she received £50 by her family to support her for a month, she usually managed to only take £20 out of that to buy goods for petty trading, the rest went for the rent and her children, and since January 2016 also for food. When though she did not receive that money regularly, she had to pay her debts first, usually to the landlord and for power, and often nothing remained for her to do any trading that month.

Fatoumata was convinced that she would have more chances at finding a regular job if she knew how to properly read and write. She went to a madrasa for 5 years when she was 9, "not the French school as that was not for girls according to my relatives," but they never learned how to read and write the Roman alphabet. When she got married at 14, an arranged wedding – "it's what happens if you're a Fulani and live in a village" – she told me she wanted to keep going to school, but had to stop, as

149. A well known informal banking/saving system: every member (usually a neighbour) give her a small sum of money every day, between £0.50 and £1.50, and she would give back at the end of the month the whole sum, minus one day, that she would keep for herself. Three of my informants did that, some more constantly than others; it is a common working activity, especially for women, in urban centres in Burkina Faso.

she got pregnant right after. She never met her husband (then aged 35 or 36, she cannot remember) before the wedding day; he was from a distant relative family from another town. She was clearly slightly upset when she was talking to me about those issues; I was careful not to ask her anything or pressure her, but she continually opened up to me. Her husband has a second wife that he married after her. Later during my fieldwork, she found out that he also had a third wife, to whom he had been married for 11 years and with whom he had two children; she had no idea. He was with them in another city in Mali when he was 'travelling for work', even before she came to Burkina Faso. He had also been renting a flat in Bobo-Dioulasso for when he would come with the third wife. Fatoumata helped him pay for that unknowingly, as a few times she asked her family in Ivory Coast to send some money for her husband who was struggling very much 'on his own' in Mali. Discovering all that greatly upset her; she was quite shocked and angry to say the least. She told me that "if he told me I want to marry another woman, I can't do anything, it's his life, he can do whatever, and I can see whether I stand that and stay, or don't stand it and leave" (29/06/2016). But he never told her that.

She was not romantically attached to her husband, quite the opposite, but the secrecy and the lies about not having money to help her and their five children was what made her mad. Otherwise, the arrangement of him being away most of the time was convenient for her. "I don't even notice his absence. He does 6-8 months in Mali and then maybe comes for 3-6 days, and leave again. Here I'm well with only my kids, and without him around […] the only problem is the lack of money, if there would be money I'd only wish he'd be far" (25/05/2016). She repeatedly said how when her father was still alive things were easier for her, "because he would support me [financially] whenever I needed. He died almost four months ago – it will be four

months on May 5th, when I'll travel to Ivory Coast for the sacrifice of the four months" (18/04/2016). Fatoumata's mother died when she was not even 10 years old, and her father went to Ivory Cost to remarry; she stayed in Mali with other relatives and soon after got married. She would go visit him at times, as her brother from the same mother was living there too. Her father was a *marabout*,[150] and despite being away and having remarried, he was always there when she needed him, she told me. When in April we discussed whether she would consider going back to Mali, she said that it would depend on her husband, whether he would find a place that was safe and if he would be able to take care of them. "If we would have to struggle every day to get food and earn some money, it's not worth it. If you have to start from zero again, I won't go. The city [Douentza] is paralysed, his shops have been destroyed… to whom can we sell?" (18/04/2016). She eventually said that she would rather stay here, find the money for her kiosk so she could be independent in taking care of her children. She added that when her son will have mastered his job (he is a mechanic apprentice) he would take care of them and they would be ok. "I did four years here, I became like a Burkinabè. You're here and you don't know you're not one of them. We do everything together, if there's a baptism, a wedding, etc." (25/05/2016).

When Fatoumata found out about her husband's third wife, her aspirations indeed changed. Besides becoming even more convinced that she wanted to become economically independent so as not to need to rely on anyone in general and her husband in particular, she started thinking about moving to Abidjan with her brothers. Even if her father was not there anymore, some of her brothers used to help her financially when the husband was not sending money and she cared for them. She also thought that there would be more opportunities for all her children. She therefore

150. Fatoumata's father was an important one and came from a lineage of *marabouts*.

asked her stepmother to convince her older brother to give her one of the many 'courts' with multiple houses, which belonged to her father. They own various properties in Abidjan and she would have liked to live in one of the houses and rent the other ones, and with that money she would pay for the children's school fees and buy what was needed. She thus wanted to go to Abidjan with all her children and stay close to her family and far from her husband. Her stepmother would wait until the end of Ramadan, then reunite the family and discuss Fatoumata's situation. If that did not work out, she said she certainly would never go back to him in Mali. She would stay here in Bobo-Dioulasso and try harder to find money to open her kiosk.

None of these two plans has worked out so far. Her older brother in Ivory Coast said she could not go there as she wished; “he told me that people would think he asked me to go there, and thus they'd point at him as the one breaking up my household” (09/07/2016). No further discussion was allowed. She therefore started thinking about how to actuate the kiosk plan in Bobo-Dioulasso. It was hard to ask for help though, as many acquaintances, included the wealthy cousin, told her that she had no right to be upset about the 'secret wife'. They told her she just had to accept that; “they tell me it's life and I can't have a say in his life and if I'm mad it's just for jealousy” (10/07/2016). Just before I left Burkina Faso she told me she was thinking of giving up her refugee status and staying, as that would give her XOF140,000 in cash grants for return (XOF35,000 for her and the three children with her[151]), enough to start the kiosk.

Yet, she could not do it. She was and still is officially registered as part of the household of her wealthy cousin; they did not live in the same area of the city and their relationship deteriorated after he told her to just accept her marital situation. As

151. Her other two children stopped being officially recognised as refugees in 2013, when they returned to Bamako to live with their aunt and finish high-school.

the cousin was listed for UNHCR and CONAREF as the head of household, he had to ask for facilitated return for her and her children. If only part of a household applied for it, the agencies would see this as 'suspicious', in that they probably did not want to actually go back to Mali (as families are thought to move together in that context, which is not always the case), therefore not fulfilling the theoretically necessary criteria for that support. Secondarily, the cousin did not want to 'upset' the agencies by applying for what was a de-facto deregistration in exchange for money because he was one of the two remaining refugees employed full time by the agencies. If he were to apply for facilitated return for himself too, he would lose that job. In addition, he is very well off and the cash grant for return would not have a significant financial impact on his life. Despite Fatoumata and her cousin's relation being far from idyllic, she told me she did not want to go to CONAREF and explain her personal situation and how the cousin told her she could not apply for it, therefore potentially putting him in a delicate position with the agencies, as that would completely ruin the already shaky relationship Fatoumata had with her family. Fatoumata's embodied experience of the refugee category moved with time, from being something helpful that would guarantee her a basic income and food supply every month, to being an opportunity, if cashed in, to be presented with a lump sum to be used as an investment for her petty trading. This opportunity became a missed one for her.

Reflecting on Fatoumata's case, it is clear that gender and family dynamics, as well as economic needs, shaped and will continue to shape her daily life and long-term aspirations, therefore her 'refugee experience' and refugeeness as well. One cannot understand how she came to the desire to give up the refugee status and see it as a commodity/asset, and why she could not give it up, without considering – in

addition to the humanitarian context in Burkina Faso – her story and the power relations ruling it. Looking at how the refugee status went from being perceived by the refugees as something useful (for a variety of reasons) and to be grateful for, and by the humanitarians as a legal instrument allowing for services and rights, to an object worth a certain amount of money, unveils broader dynamics behind my informants' lives, which play into their migration experience and their relationship with the refugee category.

Beyond its monetary value, the refugee status is first and foremost part of a social and political economy that provides the conditions for its capitalization. Without recognising this component of capitalization, it is largely impossible to make sense of when, why, and how the refugee status is most valued for its economic role at particular moments. In addition to the concept of commodity fetishism, anthropology of capitalism/globalisation allows me to bring to light this component.

AWKWARD SCALES AND THE PARTIALITY OF GLOBAL CAPITALISM

> "Hegemony is made as well as unmade with friction" (Tsing 2005, 6).

> "Without human agents, without specified locations and moments and actions, realities are not realized, nothing takes place, the present has no presence. These locations and moments, people and practices … comprise the fragments from which an anthropology of millennial capitalism, and the culture of neoliberalism is to be constructed: the fragments from which we may recuperate the

> mechanisms by which the local is globalized and the global localized" (Comaroff and Comaroff 1999, 295).

If in the previous chapter both the theoretical and empirical material showed the general tendencies of today's refugee regime, what I discuss in this chapter nuances that view. Indeed, I am arguing that the refugee regime is commodifying part of the practices, politics, and discourses in it, but I also argue that this happens in unexpected ways, with a variety of outcomes, in specific instances and times, and not fully. When studied, these unexpected or 'unsuccessful' instances tell us a lot about both the tendencies of the refugee regime and the context in which it operates. As the Comaroffs say (1999, 284), "the things of which we speak have to do with global processes or, more precisely, with specific interactions, in the here and now, between the global and the local." There is a stimulating literature in anthropology that looks at processes often deemed as global, or expressions of 'globalisation', but that carefully account for contextual forms, shapes, and 'surprises' without unchallengingly accepting capitalism and neoliberalism as wholly deterministic, 'natural', and homogenising forces.

The first fundamental contribution of what can be described as anthropology of globalisation and capital/-ism, is to show how 'global processes' need to be understood in a contextualised way, as the localities or phenomenon they are supposed to encompass, change, or take over, are products and simultaneously producers of such processes. There is not a 'right' or logical way these global processes should work, as an evolutionary understanding of the world would let us believe, rather there are contemporary and localised expressions of them, as they only take sense and come to life in encounters. Comaroff and Comaroff (1999) in their piece discussing 'new magic for new situations' (284), show that phenomenon like the

one they studied – occult economies – are the expressions of how "a planetary phenomenon [a global capitalist economy] takes on a strikingly particular local form" (291). Particularly in this chapter, the work I do therefore needs to be situated "on an awkward scale, neither unambiguously 'local' nor obviously 'global' – but on a scale in between that, somehow, captures their mutual determinations. And their indeterminacies" (282). Relatedly, Elyachar tells us that "[t]he global and the local can rather be mutually constructed categories" (2005, 170). This author gives a central role to power relations in the processes of incorporation, modification, and resistance of/to globalisation and capitalism, and highlights how these relations are changed by but also change neoliberalism's 'advance'. These power relations are never uniquely global, national or local, there are not such distinctions. What I observed in Burkina Faso, the commodification of refugeeness, is to be analysed in the mutually constituting encounters.

Tsing (2005) argues that the "specificity of global connections is an ever-present reminder that universal claims," and capitalism is one of those, "do not actually make everything everywhere the same" (1). This is because the universality of these claims – and dreams and schemes – takes form "in the sticky materiality of practical encounters" (1), they come alive in 'friction'.

> "Cultures are continually co-produced in the interactions I call 'friction': the awkward, unequal, unstable, and creative qualities of interconnection across difference. […] At this confluence, universals and particulars come together to create the forms of capitalism with which we live. There is no point in studying fully discrete 'capitalisms' […]. The cultural specificity of capitalism

> forms arises from the necessity of bringing capitalist universals into action through worldly encounters" (Tsing 2005, 4).

What I do therefore resonates with this; in the previous chapter I looked at a 'vector' through which capitalism (capitalist epistemologies and logics) can spread: the refugee regime. These are, in light of Tsing's work, two supposedly universal claims (capitalism *and* the refugee regime/humanitarianism); in this chapter I highlight the forms these two take in frictions, in the context of Burkina Faso. All universal claims are not fully deterministic happenings, but the opposite is not realistic either, meaning that "this work avoids too eager a celebration of a southern cultural autonomy capable of absorbing and transforming every imperial mandate" (Tsing 2005, 5). Comaroff and Comaroff (1999, 295) argue as well that "[e]ven the most overdetermined, most complex, most inchoate of world-historical forces – colonialism, the global market, cyberspace, "late" capitalism – take shape in sociocultural processes that inhabit particular places during particular periods in particular persons." Such an approach, is also relatable with what I discussed in the introduction, where I said that the coexistence of different economic systems (for example, with Taussig showing that a peasant mode of production and a capitalist mode of production are found in the same society) is what is found in reality. It is never entirely one way or another.

This understanding is very important in showing how a 'force' is never fully deterministic and takes on unexpected shapes, which allows us to think, hope, or fight for something different. Capitalism's advance is not straightforward, nor sure. The story of neoliberal globalization, as Tsing puts it, "is not enough" (2005, 69). In the weaknesses and partiality of global capital is where alternative forms of global commitment can be found or conceptualised. Tsing's perspective on universal claims

could have been applied as well to the whole of humanitarianism and the refugee regime. Though this is not specifically what I do in this thesis, my analyses of the refugee regime simultaneously illustrates the non-fully-deterministic humanitarian regime, which is not something *per se*; rather it is born and reveals itself in frictions. This also links with the theory behind Chapter 6 and particular with why labelling studies in relation to forced migration have often failed to capture the complexities of the realities they want to study. People, refugees, are made up in interactions and only make sense in those frictions.

In this chapter I show how the refugee status, and therefore the category of refugee as well, was made something to be valued – also and mostly in use and exchange terms – by the refugee regime. This is linked with the commodification processes at work in parts of the refugee regime, but it is also re-appropriated by the refugees in light of their lived experiences and contexts. This mirrors the way I understand the overall production of refugeeness, which happens in discourses, practices, politics and within particular social and political economies. Indeed, as Andersson states (2014, 286), building on Hacking's works, "it is important not to lose sight of the complicity of those subject to such circulation and categorization."

What I present in this chapter may seem like a very explicit outcome of a commodifying refugee regime; after all, I focus on how refugees capitalize on their refugee status, making it an economic asset. Yet, the most important thing that I demonstrate in this chapter is how that possibility or necessity is not the same for everyone. Not everything is commodified and given a monetary value; these circumstances need to be situated in the broader social and political economies in which my informants live.

This also links with my use of the concept of commodity and commodity fetishism as a theoretical approach, explained in the introduction. Indeed, by using such an approach, we recognise that "it remains vital to relate the life of things, in one way or another, to the ways in which people give meaning to them," but we need to do so without falling into "the trap of equating agency (as neo-classical economics tends to do) with the supposedly universal propensity towards individual optimization of *homo economicus*" (Van Binsbergen 2005, 19). Looking at the capitalization of the refugee status, allows me to underline how, yes, refugees do have some choices and certainly agency in their option of selling or not the status, but we need to understand those choices and options in the broader contexts (and there are many) to which they belong and in which they evolve. Showing how refugeeness becomes commodified, how 'the refugee' is constructed and what plays into it, unveils the "rules which structure the range of options" (Ferguson 1990, 137) – in this case deciding whether to sell the status or not – and which are too often overlooked in humanitarian interventions and studies. I maintain that looking into commodification processes can unveil the ways in which the category and status of refugee are reproduced, negotiated and contested. In this instance, this is because 1) UNHCR (and WFP) made the status and category an asset, thus distancing them from the supposedly legal, normative and moral roles they have; and 2) the refugees negotiate with the category in this way, by taking it, in a more or less forced way, as something they can capitalize on. How UNHCR played a role in making the refugee status an asset in Burkina Faso is discussed further down. I now briefly introduce the measure that allows for a value to become attached to the refugee status: cash grants for return.

CASH GRANTS FOR RETURN

For UNHCR, the 'voluntariness' of return means "to promote enabling conditions for voluntary repatriation, to ensure the exercise of a free and informed choice, and to mobilize support for returnees" (UNHCR 2008). This can include a variety of measures[152] and since the early 1990's, "[w]here appropriate, consideration should be given to the use of cash grants, as these provide a flexible means of support which maximise individual agency and choice" (UNHCR 2008). Cash grants, or encashment programmes, started being used in various countries during the 1990's and have continued until now. UNHCR distinguishes between four types of cash-based interventions: unconditional cash transfers, conditional cash transfers, vouchers (for cash or goods), and microcredit; these interventions "can be stand-alone interventions or they can be used in combination with in-kind assistance" (UNHCR 2012, 6). Up to 2012, cash grant for return/repatriation represented 49% of UNHCR's use of that system (16).[153] Cash grants have been used to support returnees in two kinds of operations: organized repatriation and facilitated repatriation/return. The first type of operation usually happens on a very large scale, involving thousands of refugees and spanning over a limited time, while facilitated return cash grants are usually distributed to a smaller number of individuals and over longer periods of time (see Appendix 6).

There is a lack of academic or policy-oriented work on cash grants for return, what they can imply and mean for the people receiving them and whether these

152. Such as "organizing 'go-and-see' visits for refugees, compiling updated information on their country and region of origin, engaging in peace and reconciliation activities, promoting housing and property restitution, and providing return assistance and legal aid to returnees" ('Voluntary return', unhcr.org).

153. Cash grants for return can be distributed and complemented following a variety of modalities and with various aims – transportation, reconstruction, food; see UNHCR (2012) and Crisp and Mayne (1994).

programmes are successful in terms of helping refugees to return and start anew in their country of origin. One of the only available studies[154] is a UNHCR evaluation (Haver et al. 2009) of the programme for Burundian refugees in Tanzania, started in 2007. This study, based on a document review, a quantitative survey, focus groups, and a series of individual interviews, found that "[n]early without exception, those interviewed […] spoke very positively about the cash grant" (15). They praised the fitting of the intervention with the needs of returnees wanting to re-integrate in their country of origin after having been in exile for a very long time (the refugees concerned with this grant left Burundi in 1972 or 1993). They also underlined how the existence of cash as part of the package was not the only reason explaining why so many Burundian decided to return, but stressed how it fitted the needs of the people wanting to return. These needs are listed as mostly economical – for example transportation, food, shelter, school fees, buying land for agriculture – and one can therefore wonder how they so certainly state that the cash was not "a 'carrot' which in itself attracted returnees" (Haver et al. 2009, 43). If the cash *did* represent a 'carrot', this might have questioned the already unstable lines between voluntary and forced return. Haver and colleagues' certitude seems based on a conviction that such measures are part of a broader humanitarian (moral) plan and therefore needs to be detached from pure economical and political – also in terms of promoting 'too actively' return – motivations. It is a respectable work of program evaluation, but it remains one financed by UNHCR.

There are different modalities in which cash grants for return are handled in UNHCR's operations, particularly concerning *where* they are distributed – this can have a significant impact for people when deciding if applying for one or not – and

154. Another one is the review of the first encashment programme for Afghan refugees living in Pakistan (1990-1993) done by Crisp and Mayne in 1994.

whether only in the form of cash or as a return package made up of cash and goods (like cereals). Haver et al. (2009) explain how in their case study, 20% of the grant was given in Tanzania and the rest once back in Burundi. What this report highlighted, is how in that context "cash worked best when it was combined with other forms of assistance. Cash alone will only rarely be appropriate and at worst, may give the impression that UNHCR is seeking to 'purchase' returns" (Haver et al. 2009, 44). I myself argue that UNHCR is 'purchasing' returns, or, more precisely, refugees are 'selling' and capitalizing on their status. Yet I do so while approaching these processes through a perspective of commodification, which acknowledges the complexities behind these 'purchases' – such as the agency refugees can and cannot express, what seeing refugeeness as a commodity tells us about the reproduction of the category refugee and the ways in which UNHCR actually transforms the refugee status in an economic asset. I show that it is not a linear and unilateral monetary transaction.

Turton and Marsden (2002) looked into the second wave of repatriation for Afghan refugees (from Pakistan and Iran, following the first wave in the early 1990s) and it is one of the only studies analysing – more than just reporting and evaluating – repatriation and cash grants for return and their broader implications. The main contribution of this work was to question the quantification of returns, in what it is often used as a tool of measuring the success of these operations.[155] "The official figure for the number of returnees is an accurate record of those who received assistance, but not of those who repatriated" (2002, 3). They say so because they observed a phenomenon they defined as 'recycling': the assistance package for

155. "[A] direct correlation to be made between border crossing and encashment figures" (Crisp and Mayne 1994, 58), meaning whether refugees remained in Pakistan or not after deregistration, may not be important for donors, as long as refugees were off the assistance paid by them; but it was and is important for UNHCR and host and origin states, as numbers are politically significant for these actors (e.g. see Crisp 1999; Long 2013).

returnees and its monetary component in particular, seemed to have motivated various individuals to sign up for repatriation to Afghanistan, who then returned to Pakistan to start the process again – registration in Pakistan, signalling the intention to deregister in Pakistan and then collection of the return package in Afghanistan. In addition, they also explained how some of those who collected the repatriation package may not have had the intention of returning 'for good', in that they were seasonal migrants and 'for good' had no meaning for them (Ibid.). The number of people who actually returned and stayed in Afghanistan was therefore much lower than the official statistics provided.

When analysing what could have motivated people to repatriate to Afghanistan, and not only for 'recyclers', Turton and Marsden argue that a hostile environment in the host country and promotion of return by UNHCR and governments was likely not "enough to persuade people to repatriate, provided they were managing fairly well economically. […] It was those who were having difficulty making ends meet that would have been most likely to put their trust in the 'encouraging messages' they were receiving from the international community and to 'vote with their feet' for repatriation" (2). Such an observation is telling in that it shows the diversity characterising 'the refugee community', and takes into account structural dynamics such as socio-economic class when trying to understand repatriation dynamics. It simultaneously demonstrates how the monetary component of return packages certainly plays a role into these decisions, because it discriminates between people in need of money, and those well-off who had the actual choice of remaining refugees or applying for return.[156]

156. At times it may seem that I am critiquing the cash grant system for return, in that it reinforces existing, or creates new, inequalities between forced migrants, but this is not the aim of my study. I am just trying to unpack these measures.

In many countries where such programmes are implemented, taking the cash grant and returning to – or staying in, if it is distributed in the host country – the host country is not necessarily feasible, depending on the possibilities, in legal, social, and economic terms, of regularly living there. Since the early 2000s there has been an increased interest, mostly in academia but also occasionally taken up in policy discourse, in understanding refugees' migrations as a 'durable' or temporary solution, and therefore questioning "the traditional model of repatriation as a physical movement from a country of exile to a country of origin" (Long 2013, 7). Yet, in practice, positive perceptions about such movements and consequent practical actions by states, donors, and UNHCR itself did not exactly follow. Crisp and Mayne (1994, 105), explained how "[i]f a refugees' intention is ultimately to return to Afghanistan, maximizing behaviour such as splitting his family, keeping his passbook current, doing seasonal work in Pakistan and returning periodically to Afghanistan to assist in the reconstruction of his home village, is considered quite appropriate and commendable." But making it appropriate and commendable in practice, if the aim of that refugee is eventually to remain in the host country, is not widely praised. "If, on the other hand, his intention is to remain in Pakistan, similar behaviour is viewed as unacceptable" (Ibid.).

This attitude could partly be understood as a consequence of certain expectations from UNHCR, donors, governments, and societies, regarding refugees' actions and practices. Because aid has been understood as a selfless gift,[157] refugees should be appreciative of the assistance they received and when the time is right, either go back to their country of origin, apply for citizenship in the host country, or be resettled.

157. By a variety of actors, practitioners – I did meet some in 2013 and 2014, who openly told me refugees should always be grateful for the aid received – but also media and academics, these latter when analysing aid through the gift prism, as discussed in the introduction.

They should not apply for return, take the package accompanying it – with the cash grant – and stay. Yet it is precisely what can and does happen in the context I studied. Legally, Malian refugees are allowed to do that but in the eyes of the international community and possibly others too (as host society and media), they are abusing the system, by capitalizing on their status; they are not doing what is expected from them with the refugee status. This status can become an economic asset, in that it just becomes a piece of paper that is worth a certain amount of money and can be liquidated if needed, nothing more than that. Under certain conditions, the expectations and accompanying representations as well as the assistance and protection, can all be 'sold'. Refugeeness, the way a refugee is supposed to behave, mainstream images and normative constructions of 'the refugee',[158] are all part of that transaction and supposedly leave the person when she gives up the legal status.

The encashment programme and the context in which it happens in Burkina Faso – to be developed over the next pages – are therefore significant factors participating in reproducing the refugee status as an economic asset and in commodifying refugeeness. As refugees, Malians in Burkina Faso, in addition to the same rights that 'normal' migrants would have, also have international protection, free health-care, possible subsidies for primary school fees, and food and cash assistance (until January 2016). How would they arrive at the decision of selling the refugee status or considering it an option? Why would they do it? One answer to these questions, which I turn to next, is the way food and cash assistance was stopped for urban refugees in Bobo-Dioulasso, and the practical consequences of that.

158. A passive victim, a helpless displaced person in need of assistance, a fraud, and so on.

ASSIGNING A VALUE TO REFUGEENESS

The possibility of exchanging one's status for money, or 'selling' it, seemed to me like one illustration of how the humanitarian aid regime can be commodifying: UNHCR and the host government have the power to decide who is a 'deserving' refugee, i.e. who fulfils the right expectations when applying for the status. Consequently they allow refugees to give up the status if they express even an unverified desire to return to their country of origin, with UNHCR deciding this is worth £45 – while the social and political relations behind this process are concealed.[159] Indeed, while the reality is more complex than this simple depiction, I still argue that, assigning a value to the refugee status through the facilitated return measure, coupled with the end of food and cash assistance, is one way in which UNHCR can commodify refugeeness, in the sense of eventually assigning a value (literally in this example, of £45) to refugeeness. In this section I will develop how the capitalization of the refugee status came to be from the humanitarians' perspectives, or more precisely their actions. The way in which the category is reproduced and contested does not come solely from the refugees' side, but it also depends on the way the humanitarian context they inhabit had changed and evolved over time.

159. I was not able to find out how UNHCR decided on the value of the cash grant for return; this cash grant was the whole return package and was not complemented by goods.

AN UNHAPPY ENDING: CUTTING FOOD AND CASH ASSISTANCE FOR URBAN REFUGEES IN BOBO-DIOULASSO[160]

Before arriving in Burkina Faso I could not have known that I would carry out my research in a moment of change concerning the way urban refugees were taken care of, and in particular see first-hand the end of food and cash assistance and the consequences it had on the targeted population. When I had just arrived in Ouagadougou, I went to visit one of the CONAREF officers who I had met and who helped me significantly during my previous research. He informed me about the changes that were to come. He asked me why I wanted to research refugees in Bobo-Dioulasso, as, according to him, they do not correspond to stereotypical images of 'the refugee' and he could not therefore comprehend my interest in 'well-off traders' who happened to have the status. He then warned me that they were going to cut them off the assistance "so to push them back home" (08/10/15). Later on that day I had a similar conversation with a UNHCR staff member; he was more understanding of the reasons why urban refugees may be an interesting research topic, but was similarly puzzled about my assumed focus on 'non-vulnerable refugees'. He told me that "those in the city aren't vulnerable, because they have opportunities to work, they trade, etc." (8/10/15). He also informed me that they were going to cut the assistance to refugees in Bobo-Dioulasso precisely because of the supposed lack of vulnerability in that context. Besides eventually finding out that in reality not all refugees were rich traders, such a statement highlights the idea that 1) researchers should only be interested in refugees living in camps; and that 2) 'real refugees' are in camps, and only they are deserving of assistance and interest. Additionally, these discussions

160. This section is based on conversations I had with humanitarian workers in Ouagadougou and the way the humanitarian actors presented the end of assistance to the refugees in Bobo-Dioulasso, as I was able to take part in that crucial meeting.

mirrored the non-involvement of these organisations with urban forced migrants and the distance they have from the field (those based in offices in Ouagadougou), as the reality is not as homogenous as they described to me. This came up repeatedly during my fieldwork and as I told UNHCR senior officers during the meeting at the end of my research, such a vision of the situation in Bobo-Dioulasso actually is at the heart of so many problems that the Malians are now facing there.

As I said in Chapter 3, from early 2013 until end of 2014, UNHCR had a staff member permanently posted in Bobo-Dioulasso; at the beginning of 2015 that person went back to Ouagadougou. Nevertheless, the villa occupied by UNHCR continues to operate as the office space for the partner organisations still involved; at first they were three but when I left in August 2016 only one organisation was left. The villa is located in one of the residential areas of Bobo-Dioulasso (where no refugees lived but where I did live), and is now probably only used at 10% of its capacity – it is one of the biggest buildings in the neighbourhood. This reduction in operational size corresponded with a plan to reduce aid in Bobo-Dioulasso. Indeed my fieldwork coincided with changes and cuts in the mode of assistance for urban refugees in Burkina Faso. The most important one was the end of food and cash assistance provided to urban refugees. This provision started in the rainy season (summer) 2012, and urban refugees in Bobo-Dioulasso would receive every month – except when there were logistical problems at the WFP level – around £4,50 and a certain amount of food per person: 6kg of rice, 1.5kg of green beans, 750g of oil, 750g of CSB (corn soya blend, a fortified 'flour' for children and other vulnerable groups), and 150g of salt. This corresponds to the assistance distributed in the camps in Burkina Faso. Yet, urban refugees in Ouagadougou did not have this aid; this was justified by the agencies by their vicinity to the refugee camp of Sag-Nioniongo (now closed) and the

possibility for the refugees be registered in the camp while living in the city. The food distribution in Bobo-Dioulasso occurred at a centre designated by the municipality and refurbished by UNHCR, situated in the Kolma neighbourhood. This was quite convenient for the refugees as many live in that area of the city or nearby; certainly a more convenient location than UNHCR's offices (see Appendix 7).

Ten days after arriving in Bobo-Dioulasso, on October 16 2015, I attended a meeting organised by UNHCR, WFP, and CONAREF to communicate to the refugees in Bobo-Dioulasso that, effective January 2016, the food and cash assistance was going to stop. I went there with the CONAREF local representative and was nervous about what was about to unfold, for two reasons. Firstly, I was aware of what they were going to discuss, and secondly, I had only met with one refugee by then and knew I was going to be perceived as an intruder or a humanitarian worker by all the others. The meeting took place at the distribution centre and once there, the CONAREF representative left me on my own, meaning that he had to verify that everything was ready for the national representatives about to arrive from Ouagadougou, and therefore was unable to introduce me to anyone. I introduced myself to a couple of people, but was mostly just standing outside the hangar waiting for something to happen. I decided to go under the shelter and sit on the refugees' side – as opposed to the line of chairs in front reserved for the humanitarians – towards the edge of the space, so to try and interfere as little as possible. Yet, two men came up to me asking me if I was working with WFP and if I wanted to sit in front. I quickly replied I was not, and was doing just fine sitting at the back of the 'room'. There were around 60 refugees, half women and half men, of various ages. The directors coming from Ouagadougou were late, and after what felt like hours but were more likely fifteen minutes, I saw Betty, my first, and so far only, informant. When she saw me,

she came to sit with me and started introducing me to people who were close to us. Betty explained to me that many of the refugees did not come to these meetings, as they did not see the point. They were not aware of what was going to be discussed that day. Forty-five minutes after the planned start, the directors arrived. The CONAREF local representative opened the meeting by stating that it was going to be a very important one, and that was why, in addition to French, all the issues discussed were also going to be translated in Tamasheq and Dioula. He introduced the 'very important people' sitting in front of the audience: the CONAREF national coordinator, the UNHCR BF national representative, the WFP BF national representative, the previous UNHCR coordinator in Bobo-Dioulasso and the local coordinators of the other organisations then involved in the humanitarian operation in Bobo-Dioulasso: CREDO, IEDA, and CSI. The first three were the only ones who talked.

What was said to the refugees in summary was that because of the growing number of refugee related emergencies worldwide, funding to finance humanitarian operations in Africa had greatly diminished, and donors had started heavily cutting their contributions to West Africa offices since June 2015. Donors therefore asked UNHCR, WFP, and CONAREF to assist refugees on the basis of vulnerability of individuals rather than along the lines of legal status. They all stressed how 'refugee' should not be equated with assistance, but it is rather the combination of the legal status and vulnerability that corresponds to the right to being assisted. Because they (the organisations) all need to save money, they decided to prioritise refugees living in camps. Therefore, starting January 2016, refugees living in Bobo-Dioulasso would not be receiving food and cash assistance anymore. They continued by explaining what would happen to the people sitting in front of them: “we, partners, are aware

that we cannot just come and say the assistance is over, goodbye; this is why we want to start discussing in the coming weeks with you to find solutions for those who want to stay. There's a need to find a solution together, to work together to find which activities you could do with our support." (WFP national representative, 16/10/2015). He clarified this 'working together' as an opportunity for refugees to suggest to them activities – business-oriented – to finance and therefore help the refugees become self-reliant. Yet they quickly added that they were not able to quantify how much they would be able to help, or exactly which kind of activities they were looking for. They asked the refugees to keep in mind that the means of UNHCR in the country remained limited, but encouraged them to propose their plans anyway and how the Agency should be able to support IGA of small scale and small investments on refugees' business projects. The UNHCR national representative then said how, if some families wished so, the Agency would take charge of moving people from the city to the camps in the north of Burkina Faso. Betty turned to me and said "they want to put people in the camps, that's what she's actually saying." The director continued saying how the facilitated return measure, started in 2014, was another possibility. The last sentence she said at the meeting was, "there will always be a priority place for vulnerable people in everything we do" (16/10/2015).

The fact that funds were available for the same person to receive assistance in the camp, but not if the person decided to stay in the city is representative of how UNHCR and the humanitarian aid regime operate alongside simplistic ideals of vulnerability and refugeeness (that I discuss in the next chapter), namely that 'real', 'deserving', and vulnerable refugees are those in camps.[161] On one side, it does make

161. There seems to be a contradiction between this demand of refugees to be 'vulnerable', and my analysis of the previous chapter, highlighting the construction of the 'neoliberal refugee'; this will be discussed in Chapter 6.

sense as in the city people have more opportunities and tactics that they can deploy. They are generally from an urban or semi-urban background, while refugees living in camps more often come from rural areas. On the other side, if funds were available, why not just let them choose where to live? Or why not use those funds to help the urban refugees who had been living with assistance for four years to transition to 'self-reliance' (for those who were not yet so)? When discussing these questions with the UNHCR and WFP representatives I was told that they follow donors' guidelines, which dictate that assistance should only be provided to refugees living in camps, the only ones *really* needing help. More detailed answers were not given to me, and I am therefore unsure how to answer these questions, but what is sure is that none of the urban refugees in Bobo-Dioulasso wanted to be moved to the camps in the north of the country, and no additional help, nor continued support for urban refugees categorized as vulnerable, ever came. What I am also sure of is that these actions of UNHCR and WFP (particularly the unfulfilled promises of transitional aid), together with the possibility of applying for facilitated return (getting £45 for it), and remaining in the country, put in motion the possibility of capitalizing on the refugee status. I will now move to the facilitated return measure, the second key contributor to the humanitarian commodification of the category.

FACILITATED RETURN IN BURKINA FASO, OR, 'EXCHANGING A PIECE OF PLASTIC FOR £45'

A Tripartite Agreement between UNHCR and the governments of Mali and Burkina Faso was signed on January 9 2015, laying out the legal bases for voluntary repatriation for Malian refugees. Spontaneous return has logically always been an

option,[162] though UNHCR started offering assisted repatriation some three months before signing the tripartite agreement. This meant that refugees applying for return would be assisted in two ways: UNHCR and CONAREF would provide them with security information concerning their desired area of return,[163] and give each member of the household registered as a refugee £45 once the person left their card with CONAREF. Their demand would then be approved.[164] The CONAREF local officer told me that they do not encourage repatriation, but they cannot force people to stay in Burkina. "All we can do is help them to check how the situation is in the specific place they want to go and give them advice, but if in the interview we see that the person really wants to go, we cannot forbid that" (02/02/2016). On that day, he also told me how they were expecting more people applying for it in December 2015 and January 2016 (indeed, in December there was a significant increase in application) as they were cutting the assistance.

	2015	Up to Nov. 2016
Facilitated	48 (81%)	191 (94%)
Spontaneous	11 (19%)	12 (6%)

Table 1 - UNHCR Data Burkina Faso, return applications in Bobo-Dioulasso

162. Between September and December 2014, 86 refugees from Bobo-Dioulasso repatriated spontaneously to Mali (UNHCR Data); according to my informants this was due to the fact that already in summer 2014, UNHCR and WFP said they would end assistance from January 2015. This did not eventually happen, but some refugees left anyway (and not with facilitated return). Spontaneous return can be recorded in two ways: 1) a refugee goes to UNHCR or CONAREF offices to announce her departure; or 2) a refugee does not appear for three times in a row at the food and cash distribution, or does not come when re-registration is done (it happened twice in Burkina after the initial registration).

163. Though most return application were for the central and northern areas of Mali, where the conflict is still ongoing and the situation is unstable; this despite a UNHCR officer stressing in a meeting with the refugees that assisted return is only to areas that UNHCR's partners in Mali deem ok in terms of security and safety.

164. £45 is roughly the amount of the minimum monthly salary in the formal economy in Burkina Faso. In the informal economy it can be lower. The average price for a one bedroom + living room flat in a shared courtyard, with no running water but possibility – even if informally – to have electricity, in the two neighbourhoods were most of my informants live, is XOF10,000, around £13 (per month).

As of 02/11/2016, 282 individuals had been approved for facilitated return in Bobo-Dioulasso since the introduction of this measure in November 2014. Within the total refugee population in Bobo-Dioulasso in 2014, 33% of all returns were assisted/facilitated, and 67% spontaneous. In 2015, facilitated return was chosen by 81% of those returning. By the end November 2016, it was 94% (UNHCR Data). In 2016, the numbers of returns registered – meaning, the number of return forms filled, card given back, and money given out – increased as additional promised help for supporting self-reliance did not arrive. The fact that numbers (see Appendix 8) did not correspond to expectations (in January and February they were expecting more returns) is linked to a bureaucratic problem they had in processing the demands and actually having the money to give out. In fact, CONAREF in Bobo-Dioulasso started receiving the money to exchange with the status only at the end of March 2016; none was available between January and March 2016, due to an apparent shortage of cash from either WFP or UNHCR.

The numbers of registered returns do not correspond to the actual number of people that went back. As Betty already told me in December 2015, UNHCR and CONAREF do not check that a person goes back to Mali and various refugees applying for assisted return remained in the city. This tendency increased in 2016 and is certainly still increasing now.[165] By doing this, the refugees do not do what is expected of them by the international community, the host country, or their country of origin. The refugee status at this point becomes a piece of plastic (as since 2013 they

165. I unfortunately cannot know the exact number of people who applied for it and stayed, and this is beyond the scope of my work as it would require contacting every person ever registered as a refugee in Bobo-Dioulasso. Yet, what I focus on here are the factors playing into my informants' decision to apply or not (or thinking on applying) for it while remaining in Burkina Faso. I left the field when this was becoming more of a common practice for urban refugees in Bobo-Dioulasso, but as noted I cannot be more specific on numbers. In a subsequent short visit in December 2017, my informants told me that many did indeed apply for return and stayed; the number of Malian refugees in Bobo-Dioulasso was, as of 31/12/17, 390, while they were 1083 in October 2015 (UNHCR Data).

have biometric refugee IDs that are similar to a credit card in shape, size, and material) that is left at the CONAREF office, exchanged for £45, and the former refugee then continues with her life as usual in Bobo-Dioulasso. The day I met with the CONAREF officer in February, I asked him whether he honestly thought that every person taking the money would go back to Mali. "Clearly not, there are some who don't, and there are some that go and then come back right away. But we make very very clear how if then you want the status again, it will take a long time [at least three months] and they'd need to go through the normal process, therefore your case needs to be re-examined, you need prove that you were resident during that time in Mali, and left again for fear or persecution" (02/02/16).[166] During that meeting he also explained to me that the money is provided by UNHCR, but it is actually the two agencies together that review the repatriation forms.[167] When I was discussing this later in Ouagadougou, UNHCR staff, especially senior officers, were much more reticent admitting that some (many) refugees give up the status and stay. To them, if the refugees take the money and do not go back, something feels wrong, their work went wrong, and/or the refugees reveal themselves as just taking advantage of the system. Yet the way they handled the end of the food and cash assistance transformed the status in to something to be exchanged for money, a possibility to make some money or, maybe, to get started towards self-reliance.

Commodification processes are never unilateral and uncontested dynamics; they need more than one person, or group, involved, and are complex and puzzling. In addition, they take place in more or less structured and structuring contexts, involving individuals with their own backgrounds and historicity. The way cash and food

166. The 'recycling' process (as described in Turton and Marsden 2002) is not possible in the case I studied as nowadays refugees are biometrically registered and their data are part of a global database.
167. This happens in Ouagadougou, the CONAREF local officer does not have any decisional power despite being the only person that knows the refugees in Bobo-Dioulasso and knows what happens in their lives.

assistance was ended for refugees living in Bobo-Dioulasso in concomitance with the possibility of applying for facilitated return,[168] played into such commodification processes, exemplifying a way in which the status and refugeeness can be embodied and contested. Having presented them from their practical side as 'implemented' by the humanitarian regime and actors, I will now look at them from the perspectives of the Malian refugees and show how commodification processes concerning the refugee status, and therefore also the way this category is lived and negotiated, interact with pre-existing and mutually constituting structural regimes of inequality and identity markers.

CAPITALIZING ON THE REFUGEE STATUS

The refugee status became treated as an economic asset by refugees when negative consequences of humanitarian policies (in particular the way in which assistance was ended) started. Building on Turton and Marsden (2002), I argue that indeed a calculation of costs and benefits happens in deciding whether to apply for repatriation, but we also need to nuance such assertions by understanding the broader context of forced migration in which these calculations take place. What refugees do in the circumstances of forced migration is highly influenced by a variety of intersecting factors and structures; the necessity, or option, of making the refugee status an asset to be liquidated is unequally distributed among the refugee population. As a consequence, the ability to embody, negotiate, and contest the category refugee is not the same for every person possessing the status. The 'refugee experience' is not one. With the current increasing move towards cash benefits for refugees, I expand

168. It can also be added the regional legal context that allows for Malians to live and work in Burkina Faso independently of their refugee status.

Turton and Marsden's work also by suggesting that this 'financialisation of the refugee regime' disrupts conventional ways of understanding the refugee category, and also disrupts how individuals relate to it.

SOCIO-ECONOMIC CONSEQUENCES: DEBTS, CALCULATIONS, AND CHANGING ATTITUDES

For refugees with greater financial means, the relinquishing of refugee status either to return to Mali or to obtain the repatriation money was never actually a necessity. Yet, for my informants with less income it became common practice to 'calculate' whether being a refugee was still worthwhile in 2016. By this I mean that at the end of 2015 and beginning of 2016, all of my informants were telling me how, despite the end of the assistance, they were not planning to apply for facilitated return, as they wanted to wait until the situation was stable in Mali before even considering going back. Others were clear about not wanting to go back in Mali even in the long-term, as their lives were now in Burkina Faso. Yet, none of these groups were considering 'selling' their status – "it's not worth it," in that the status gives protection at security checks, free health-care, partly covers primary school fees, and offers help in case of institutional problems. By mid rainy season 2016 (summer in Europe), most of my informants with lower financial means were either thinking of renouncing the status or were in the process of doing it, independently of their wish to go back to Mali or not. For these individuals, the cash and food assistance they had until December 2015 represented a significant support; at first they thought that with the promised punctual aid they would manage to get on, thinking about the kind of businesses they could start, what to do with IGA, and so on. It was the most

vulnerable – in terms of economic security in this case – who started considering capitalizing on the status. In addition to the realisation that the promised help would not come, I argue that two main factors brought about changes in perceptions of the worth of the status during the first half of 2016 for urban refugees in Bobo-Dioulasso: gaining debts and an increasingly critical attitude towards free health-care provided to them – this latter stance simultaneously representing increasingly critical attitudes towards UNHCR.

For Malian urban refugees in Bobo-Dioulasso and those of the lower socio-economic classes in particular, gaining debts is a direct consequence of the sudden end of assistance and the lack of the promised 'transitional' help. At the October 2015 meeting I discussed earlier, it was repeatedly stressed how aid would continue for the individuals classified as vulnerable by UNHCR,[169] and for most of other people support most likely in form of IGA or initial support for business projects was said to be coming in the first months of 2016. Such help never arrived in Bobo-Dioulasso and with time passing, people started losing faith in UNHCR in the face of concrete debt problems. Some of my informants (and other refugees who were my informants' neighbours/family members) would ask for a cash advance – usually from an acquaintance with financial means or an informal organisation – to start doing some petty trade or other more significant business, knowing that when UNHCR would give them IGA or support they could reimburse that person. Others would say to the local shops/markets where they buy food or other supplies that they would pay them at the end of the month; or, they would say to their landlord that they would give her the owed rent(s) once the humanitarian agencies gave them that help.

169. These represented 27% of the refugees in Bobo-Dioulasso as of October 2015 (data.unhcr.org).

At the end of January, Ongoïba, one of my main interlocutors, was telling me how the money of a return package was intended to pay for transport back to Mali and how "if you start using it here it won't even be enough to pay for transport. It's not worth it if you want to stay here, it's more worthwhile to keep the health care" (29/01/2016). He also told me how UNHCR and CONAREF were doing what they could with the means they had, and they (the refugees) could not deny all the help they had received in the past. Three months later, his views on the Agency and their generosity were changing; he considered it unacceptable that the organisations promised them IGA and other forms of sporadic help, but those never came. "They cannot say we won't come anymore and we abandoned you, but well, their way of doing… it's that!" (09/05/2016). For the first months I knew him, Ongoïba was one of the most loyal supporters of UNHCR, always understanding towards them and the financial difficulties the Agency in Burkina Faso was facing. Yet, in the last months of my fieldwork, his support and gratitude was fading away and he generally became more sceptical towards them and everything they were doing, or not doing, in Burkina Faso. "We all know that 8 trucks with 300 something tonnes came with sugar and rice from Mali to give to Malian refugees [for Ramadan], but it went to Djibo. But us, they don't consider us anymore as refugees. But even if we're urban refugees there are people who really struggle" (27/05/2016). Ongoïba had a decent salary and despite living in a very popular neighbourhood in a very small house, he was not directly impacted economically as other refugees were after the end of assistance. He was a very respected and well-known person within the refugees in Bobo-Dioulasso, but also in his neighbourhood and within the Dogon community in town. He had many connections, and this is why many people, refugees and others, went to him to share their problems and seek advice and help. The unfair consequences that resulted

from the end of assistance on the poorer refugees and in particular the disabled ones, really infuriated him.

Assadeck also expressed gratitude towards the aid the refugees received between 2012 and 2016 from UNHCR, WFP, and CONAREF. Yet, this is what he told me at the end of April 2016:

> "UNHCR lied to us, saying we'll get IGA but they never came. [...] UNHCR never completely properly helped us. […] you give some aid, and again, and then one day everything stops, well one day they'll get here and don't find me anymore. […] When meeting with the various bloc chiefs I found out that many chiefs suggest taking the money, as nothing comes, even if they stay. […] Many people took credit at their local kiosk or boutique, but then they don't have the money to pay back, and they thus do the same to the kiosk a bit further down, and soon they can't go out anymore as people claim their money, or simply they don't know where to go to get credit again" (27/04/2016).

This is just another example of how people started being more and more critical of UNHCR and feeling unfairly treated. They felt disrespected, mostly because they had the feeling that UNHCR had forgot them and/or was lying to them – meaning they did not make any effort to communicate transparently with the urban refugees in Bobo-Dioulasso. Betty, talking about the help that never came, told me: "If you don't know when something is actually coming, don't mention it! Don't say it will come, or people will just get mad and disappointed, and rightly so. […] it's better if they say there's nothing and then, in case something comes, it will be a positive surprise for us!" (30/06/2016). What I want to convey by sharing these insights is how, in

addition to the practical economic difficulties, a growing scepticism towards the agencies in Burkina Faso participated in shifting the perception of usefulness of the status for my informants. This therefore is of great significance in helping us understand how the refugees started to consider that selling their status was a viable option. The refugees felt that they were upholding their side of the bargain in the making of the neoliberal refugee, by taking necessary steps towards self-reliance and independence – by, for example, proposing projects to UNHCR and to start their activities as Sidi did – only then for UNHCR to renege on its promise to provide them with additional aid. The refugees tried to participate into this 'making' as demanded (notably at the meeting I previously discussed) by the agencies; yet were then frustrated by how it seemingly was only on UNHCR's (and related institutions/actors) terms that they could participate in the making of the neoliberal refugee. This brought about the shift towards looking at the refugee status as transactional, which is a form of commodification of refugeeness, but not the one wished for by the refugee regime.

In the first months of 2016, the Agency 'forgot' the urban refugees in Bobo-Dioulasso: UNHCR and its partners would not answer the Malians' demands about transitional help and the theoretical ongoing support for the populations categorised as vulnerable. They were also not giving clear responses to the CONAREF representative in Bobo-Dioulasso, who the refugees were calling on a daily basis to ask about it. The only 'transitional aid' that ever arrived in Bobo-Dioulasso for refugees during my time there was the possibility to ask for a loan at a local bank, as I mentioned in Chapter 4.

The end of assistance had a significant impact especially on the more economically vulnerable refugees, becoming an important explanatory factor in the growing pressure on people with lower means to capitalize on the refugee status. This

was confirmed by another dynamic I observed in the context I studied; for the better off families keeping or 'selling' the status would not make much of a difference and they would therefore be more prone to keep it due to its other advantages. In some of the households with fewer financial problems, not every member was registered as a refugee. When they came to Burkina Faso as refugees, not all the families came together. In many instances, some members came first and the rest joined later once they had secured a house, and maybe a job. For the wealthier families, the bureaucratic process of applying for refugee status (once the emergency phase was passed, and therefore one would not automatically be recognised as refugee *prima facie* but had to go through a more detailed registration process) represented a bigger effort than the advantages coming from the status itself. For family with lower means that came to Bobo-Dioulasso at different times, the administrative part was dealt with, in that the status and the free healthcare and cash and food assistance were a significant advantage. Within my informant circles, the households in which not everyone was registered as refugees were the wealthiest ones.

It is important that our understanding of the refugee status, and consequently refugeeness, as an asset must nonetheless not be seen as purely econo-centric, as economic calculations are mediated by broader factors that might defy quantifications but still tip the scales one way or the other. Other dynamics moderate the process of commodification. I was told of people 'forced' to sell their status, either forced by other people, or by structural inequalities. Diko's experience that I share below highlights how economic needs and gender relations are entangled in the process of the capitalization of the status. Simultaneously, Seydou and Ongoïba's reflections underline their take on the influence of financial problems over life and therefore also over decisions concerning the use of the refugee status. Diko's story is analytically

meaningful as it shows how much more there is to the commodification process than an economic transaction; how this is linked with people's lives and relationships, their past and their current experiences. It therefore also underlines the heterogeneity in 'a refugee community': as with Fatoumata's story, gender dynamics play a role in Diko's experience, yet it is a differently shaped story, with different outcomes. It therefore also elucidates how differently the refugee category is embodied and negotiated between individuals.

DIKO

In January, Ongoïba casually told me that “there are some that are forced” to give up the status. “I don't know yet whether it's true, but if it is, something very bad is happening. It seems that there are some people that are pushed by other people to do it. These scammers told them that it's very hard to get the 35'000, but they are willing to help them obtain the return in exchange for a part of that money. They're crooks doing that” (29/01/2016) He then explained to me how it is actually easy to obtain permission for facilitated return, and therefore the cash; you go to CONAREF's office, where the local representative asks you various times whether you are certain you want to go, he then tells you to think about it for two more days and go back only if you haven't changed your mind. “But it isn't hard, you don't need intermediaries for that, they're crooks. And it seems they're refugees too.” He repeated again how he only heard about that and could not confirm it yet. As he was one of the liaison people, he took this potential abuse personally, as one of his tasks was to make sure that people, if doubtful about what to do in relation to refugee protection and/or

assistance, went to him for clarification and he could then ask for information from the humanitarian partners.

In the following weeks, when discussing the possibility of applying for facilitated return, another informant, Seydou, told me about how some people are forced to give up the status: either forced by other people (therefore resonating with what Ongoïba told me), or by structural obstacles, namely financial needs. He told me about this woman, his neighbour, who was forced by one of her male relatives to take the XOF35,000 and give up the refugee status. “The reason why they forced her to do so is not clear, but I think that the brother may be giving her some money to help her, and he thus asked her to take the 35 each and give it to him or God knows what” (Seydou, 20/02/2016). She heavily regretted what she did, Seydou told me, as she had now lost free health care; “she came to me crying saying she'd ask for the status again, and I told her that that may be very difficult.” The following week, Ongoïba added that “she needed the money, so she probably didn't think too much about it. She realised too late what she had done. She maybe needed the money for rent on spot, and was pushed to do that, but now she lost healthcare [and one of her children was ill]” (Ongoïba, 31/03/2016). After realising her error, she went to see Ongoïba in his capacity as a liaison person, and asked for help. Together they called the local representative of CONAREF and explained her story, but he told them it was not that easy to get the status back, as she had clearly said in her meeting that she understood what she was doing.

Ongoïba accompanied me to meet with her a few days later. When we arrived at Diko's place we entered her courtyard (shared with at least six other families and two businesses/craftspeople) and sat on a shadowed bench on the side, quite distant from where other people were sitting. It was evident she did not want other people to

interfere in our discussion. She arrived in Burkina Faso as a refugee at the beginning of the crisis, alone with her two children, her husband remaining in Mali. She did not know where he was or what he was doing when we met. Diko registered as refugee as part of her husband's cousin's household – a common practice for women arriving on their own with their children. In January 2016, this cousin approached her and told her that everyone was going back to Mali and applying for facilitated return, as the assistance had stopped. She trusted him and despite not necessarily wanting to go back to Mali, she did not feel that she had much of a say. She therefore was compelled by her cousin to apply; she never made explicit whether he asked her for part of that money, or whether she needed that money to pay back debts, as my other interlocutors suggested earlier. She probably thought it would be better not to tell me – a white foreigner she did not know well and who could have been part of the humanitarian organisations – that she was forced to do it by her cousin, even if she may also have been compelled in part by her own economic needs. She went through the interview and insisted she was doing it in order to return to Mali and not just to obtain the cash grant; she therefore ended up 'resigning' for herself and the two children as well. That same day, she ran into Seydou and told him where she was coming from – the CONAREF office. Seydou informed her that it was not true that they were all applying for return and going back, only a few so far. “That's when I realised I had been fooled.” She has been regretting that ever since, as both herself and one of her children were dealing with health difficulties; they no longer had access to free healthcare, nor did she have enough means to pay for healthcare on her own, and her husband was impossible to reach. She told me her cousin also remained, “but he's a man so he manages somehow” (Diko, 31/03/2016). She was convinced that men's lives are 'easier', in that they are less accountable for what they do. If a

man, out of financial needs, was to leave the household and his children, or would need to sleep on a friends' mattress for a while, it would not be the end; if a woman does that, people would not accept it.

Rumours about some refugees 'helping' other refugees to give up their status, in exchange for part of the money given by UNHCR, continued to circulate until June. “The problem is, Nora,” a CREDO worker told me, “that they come complaining about it to you after they've spent all the money. But when they were pressured to do it, they didn't ask us anything” (09/05/16). What this worker meant is that they could not prove that people in situations similar to Diko's were misled into giving up the status – that is, they may have been lying to take advantage of the system. No other specific case was ever proven or discussed further among the forced migrants or the workers. This issue died down, but, in addition to revealing the role of gender relations and the need to pay back loans in people's actions, it also unveiled how financial needs were perceived as one of the factors pushing someone to capitalize on the status. In May, Seydou told me: “Many people are pushed by misery to take the 35,000” (16/05/17). He often reiterated this idea that it is not a choice for everyone, misery pushes them. He saw one of the structural obstacles (socio-economic class and needs) as a coercive circumstance. Diko was by no means the only refugee in Bobo-Dioulasso struggling with basic financial needs, which worsened once the food and cash assistance stopped without transitional aid; the refugee status then transformed into a luxury good.

Refugees facing economic hardship, directly or indirectly, coupled with a changed attitude towards the humanitarian assistance, pushed the urban refugees to perceive and use the refugee status as capital. The way this change in attitudes was most

visible was through complaints from the refugees about the value – judged according to quality, availability, and accessibility – of the free health care provided to them.

"IT IS NOT WORTH IT FOR PARACETAMOL, IBUPROFEN, AND DOXYCYCLINE ALONE"

At the beginning of 2016, free healthcare was for many a sufficient reason to keep the status despite the end of assistance. But, in concomitance with the accumulation of debts, the perception of access to health services began to shift. A different understanding of the free healthcare funded by the humanitarian regime therefore also played a fundamental role in thinking about giving up the refugee status, in deciding its value and the advantages/disadvantages of keeping it or 'cashing' it. This is just one of the many examples of shifting opinions my informants held over time, as demonstrated by Betty:

> 15/02/2016: "If you take that [the 35'000] and stay here, if for instance you get sick, what are you going to do?"
>
> 19/04/2016: "It would be convenient to take the money and stay here, it would make for a significant amount of cash. (I asked 'but you'd lose the healthcare?) True, but in any case they only give you paracetamol, ibuprofen, and at times doxy[cycline]."

Before January 2016, the healthcare for refugees in Bobo-Dioulasso was supported by CSI and UNHCR. The state nurse in charge of the service explained to me how CSI made deals with specific institutions (pharmacies, hospitals, and doctors) and additionally there were two nurses and a doctor that made up the centre itself. A refugee with a health problem would go to see the nurse and he would send them to

the appropriate centre.[170] He stressed how the refugees followed the same system and hierarchy of Burkinabè health system; it would be unfair if it were different. The advantage for refugees in terms of the health care system compared to the locals is thus purely economic. But it was more complex in a practical sense for the refugees as they had to go first to UNHCR offices, where CSI was located, and later return there if they had prescriptions that needed to be checked. This meant that they faced an additional hurdle of having to have any diagnosis and prescription approved by multiple institutions before they could actually access the 'free' healthcare.

The CSI contract ended in December 2015 and at the beginning of 2016 UNHCR and CONAREF announced that the healthcare would be administered by a health insurance company. The logic behind it was that as there was only one partner organisation left in Bobo-Dioulasso dealing with the refugees, if the health side was taken care of by an external actor, it would be less work for CREDO and therefore UNHCR. Theoretically, by being part of that health insurance, refugees would be able to access services as before and humanitarian organisations would not have to intervene, as the migrants were provided with a health card from the insurance company. In practice, this did not work well for the first months of 2016 and CREDO had to take over from CSI – though no nurse or doctor worked there. Even when the new system seemed to start working, not all the designated pharmacies (at first one, later four) and CSPS recognised the refugee cards; in June one of the CSPS in a main neighbourhood where my informants lived (Kolma) was still not recognising the cards. Although the way to obtain free health care was complicated before the insurance company took over and the refugees would have to go to the CSI office to have their prescriptions validated, they did not complain about it during my first

170. There are three types of health centres:
- CSPS: centre de santé et promotion sociale (health and social promotion centre)
- CMA: centre médical avec antenne chirurgicale (medical centre with basic surgical facilities)
- CHU: centre hospitalier universitaire (university hospital)

months of fieldwork. They expressed gratitude for the free healthcare. However, once the food and cash assistance stopped, and no transitional aid came, people were becoming more hostile towards UNHCR and also started seeing the health care services available as not so free and valuable.

Various arguments were brought forward by my informants as explanations for their increased doubt regarding the value of the free healthcare. Firstly, there was the inconvenience that in the first months of 2016, refugees had to go to UNHCR's offices to get their prescriptions approved. This posed an inconvenience due to the office's distance and the time it took to travel there from many of the refugees' homes; travel costs, whether by motorcycle or taxi also compounded this. Even for those with easy access to a vehicle, the cost of petrol for the trip would often be greater than the cash value of the medication. This fact, together with the issue of poorer refugees taking on debts and increasing their financial insecurity once food and cash assistance ended, is yet more evidence of how the humanitarian interventions, in the context I studied, reinforced and created inequalities and vulnerabilities among the communities they set out to support. Although UNHCR suggested that it was moving from a model of assisting all refugees to one targeting the most 'vulnerable', these situations expose the fact that such an approach was not thoughtfully implemented. Vulnerabilities and all their manifestations and impacts are narrowly conceived by UNHCR, in a way that does not take into account how targeting the most vulnerable must also translate into ensuring equal access to provisions. How vulnerability was calculated by the agency suggests that it was solely based on whether one was a woman, a child, elderly, or disabled, all of which are criteria far too crude to capture how vulnerability manifests in issues like access to medication. Secondly, when there were practical problems with the insurance card not being recognised, consequences

could be serious. Seydou, in July 2016 (six months after the new system should have started), felt sick when going to the market to sell his soup after evening prayer; he then asked a friend to sell his soup and went to the CSPS. There he was told he had malaria, which he knew already. Once someone has contracted malaria in the past, they can usually recognise the symptoms right away. He wanted to purchase the anti-malaria treatment at that CSPS (a certified one) with his card, but they told him that it was not recognised. He called the helpline of the insurance company – the phone number is on the refugees' health cards – and they told him to wait until the day after so they could figure out what was not working in that CSPS. He eventually borrowed the money from a friend to buy the drug himself, as one day of untreated malaria can have extremely serious consequences, as I know too well.

Other interlocutors of mine recounted how UNHCR changed their prescription. "You get a prescription but then at the UNHCR office they change it, they erase things like vitamins, and then you go back to the pharmacy and they only give you three boxes of paracetamol worth 300, much less than the price of the taxi you took to get there" (Ismail, 02/06/2016). Ismail was aware that it is not the vitamins which cure you, as he told me, but stressed how taking exactly what the doctor prescribed helps you to start feeling better. He felt that UNHCR did not allow the insurance to cover everything prescribed because they were afraid that then the refugees would go on to sell the drugs at the market.[171] Similarly, Seydou's daughter was prescribed some antibiotics and other non-generic drugs for bronchitis, but when he went to the pharmacy he was told he could only get generic and wide-spectrum antibiotics, as the ones prescribed were not covered. He ended up paying for it himself, as he did not want to compromise his daughter's health. He already lost one child in 2012. Sèo,

171. This can also be linked with what I said in Chapter 4, in relation to refugees being allowed to access the job market and do business only on UNHCR's terms.

another interlocutor, also mentioned how, independently of the illness you have, and whether there were concerns for children or not, the insurance would only cover paracetamol, ibuprofen, and doxycycline. The only known exception to this was for refugees recognised by UNHCR as having a chronic illness, such as asthma or others.

When I had my first meeting with a UNHCR officer in October 2015, he told me that in his opinion urban refugees in Burkina Faso had a somewhat motherly relation with UNHCR and gave me the example of a refugee in Ouagadougou calling one of his colleague when he hurt his ankle, to ask for advice and what to do, as is expected of a parent. “This relation will probably have an interesting change in Bobo as we will cut the assistance.” And he was right. By May/June 2016, most of my interlocutors were critical of the free healthcare plan and they were similarly critical towards UNHCR. When I first arrived, and throughout the end of 2015 and beginning of 2016, they all expressed many times and in many ways, how appreciative they were for all the support received from the agency, the other organisations, and the local communities. By the end of my fieldwork, they were all angry with UNHCR for having 'forgotten and abandoned' them.

The end of the assistance and the false promises by the humanitarian agencies (as perceived by my informants with the passage of time), in addition to increased economic insecurity, brought about the changes in attitudes towards the general value of the benefits provided by the refugee status that I highlighted. Being allowed – or forced, depending on one's situation – to capitalize on their status, and deciding on their own what to do with it, definitely shaped the forms that refugees' agency can take in that context. Such practices and attitudes are a way in which to understand how the 'refugee' category is transformed, negotiated, and embodied by those labelled

as such, where it comes to mean and represent an economic asset to be liquidated in situations of need. It can also take a very practical/active form: one can get rid of 'the refugee' category, literally. Yet if we really are to look into how refugees respond to the bureaucratic and homogenising dictates of categorization, we need to consider as much context as possible. I tried to show this by explaining how the commodification processes I studied intersect with socio-economic class and needs, as well as gender dynamics. Some refugees may want and need the money for material needs but, for reasons such as asymmetrical gender relations, are not able to sell their status so easily. To understand refugeeness and the multiplicity of experiences that forced migrants live, we must consider how pre-existing and mutually constructed hierarchies of potential domination form refugees' lives, intersecting with their migratory experiences. In addition to gender and socio-economic class, there is another aspect that, in contemporary Burkina Faso, can play a role in pushing someone to give up the status or not: race. This must be accounted for if we are to shed a nuanced and sympathetic light on the possibilities of negotiating labelling in this context.

ASSADECK[172]

> "The 35'000 works very well, many people apply for it, because it's the only thing they can get some help and money. But I won't take it. I prefer to keep it. […] With that [refugee card] you can travel

172. I collected Assadeck's life history over 11 meetings we had between December 2015 and July 2016; additionally, I have also been in touch with him after my fieldwork through Skype calls and Whatsapp, and met him in November 2016 and December 2017. I therefore also rely on these later exchanges. Our 'meetings' would usually happen at his place, his neighbours' place, and one also at his brother's work place, where we would spend either mornings, lunches, of afternoons together.

around easily, because if you've got the papers you have a proof that you're a refugee and not a terrorist." (Assadeck, 19/04/2016).

Assadeck is a young Tuareg refugee, of 'noble origins' and light-skinned, who arrived in Bobo-Dioulasso in April 2012. He is originally from Timbuktu, grew up in Kati (a town outside Bamako), and was living in Bamako, working in a factory printing stickers, t-shirts, 'and stuff'. "I was the only Tuareg, the others were Bambara." I first met him in October where he lived, in Yegueré; his house was clearly of a different type than his cousin's (Betty, who introduced me to him), which was not so far away. It was a shared courtyard, with three 'houses', but the finishing and the paint on the entrance balconies, and the water fountain in the middle of the courtyard, all signalled to me that he must have been better off than Betty. "Though he doesn't have a scooter." I later found out that yes, his side of the family was better off than Betty's, but that might not necessarily extend to Assadeck himself. He received support from his family, more than Betty, and it was his brother who paid for his rent – they lived in the same courtyard. Assadeck occupied the smallest of the houses in the courtyard, *une-pièce-salon*, with only one mattress, a mat, and a small set of two chairs and table. That first day, he offered me tea as we walked in. He had already brewed and consumed the first one and was boiling the second one, which suited me, as a whole cycle of three teas at 9am was still a bit too much at the beginning of my stay. Back then, he was a block chief liaising between the organisations and the refugees, and a point person for health, which meant that if one of the refugees living in his area would need to see a doctor or go to a pharmacy and needed advice, Assadeck was expected to direct her to the right place and give the right advice. There were five refugees with these duties in Bobo; they were paid XOF10,000 per month by the humanitarian organisations.

During our first meeting, he told me how he quickly realised there were no job opportunities for people like him, a light-skinned Tuareg man, “because they don't know us, don't trust us.” I then found out that his opinion could be nuanced in that lack of employment was not true for every refugee male Tuareg, and I would later observe that he was quite well integrated in his neighbourhood. Yet this first pronouncement actually underlined the general idea/feeling of hostility towards light-skinned Malians, especially men, in the current context in Burkina Faso. By this I do not mean that such hostility is prevalent in the whole local Burkinabè population, but rather that it cannot be denied. Hostility towards light-skinned Malians is also what 'forced' many of them living in the centre and south of Mali to come to Burkina and become refugees. “I grew up with Bambara, and worked with them and everything, I was never a rebel, never did anything, but the moment something happens in the North, they come to you and beat you, although I never did anything. That's why I'm for Azawad” (22/10/2015). Tensions between different groups – which are often qualified as racial tensions both 'emically' and by academics – have played a significant role in the Sahel region and Mali in particular for centuries (Lecocq 2010). As I explained in Chapter 3, Tuareg social strata system and their divisions partly based on skin colour, influence how perceptions and discourses around that group take shape outside it, while simultaneously shaping the way they themselves see other groups. This tension appears to follow them into refugeehood too.

In addition to an aura of mystery, distance, and prejudice that seems to have accompanied Tuareg in the Sahel area for a long time, the recent events in Mali, Ivory Coast,[173] and Burkina Faso, made my light-skinned informants much more aware of these perceptions of them and their communities. Tuareg in particular, and light-

173. I am here referring to the Grand-Bassam shootings of March 2016, claimed by AQMI.

skinned Malians in general, are associated with the Tuareg rebel movements that started the 2012 uprisings and led to the ongoing crisis. In addition, they are also linked in the social imagination with other groups involved in the Malian conflict and particularly with the jihadist groups, feared and loathed in Burkina Faso even before the terrorist attack in Ouagadougou in January 2016 (and then the ones in August 2017 and March 2018) heightened prejudices. The recent ongoing killings and incursions in villages in the northern side of the country only strengthened the negative perception of light-skinned individuals in Burkina Faso. By extension, light-skinned Fulani and Arabs are also said to be victims of verbal insults and discrimination in finding jobs. Most of my informants who were part of such groups were not directly targeted for being light-skinned,[174] and I never witnessed such exchanges – but this could be because in my presence locals may be more reticent to engage in such abuse. However, various humanitarian workers told me that this was one of their main concerns, sensitising the local population to the fact that Tuareg and other light-skinned refugees are not terrorists, should not be associated with terrorist groups, and should be treated with respect. They aired such awareness campaigns on local radio and run similar trainings for local police and army forces. Despite the reality that the majority of my informants who were of lighter skin never experienced first hand discriminatory practices or insults, all were in general aware that they could easily face more routine controls and potential threats, and some were definitely more sensitive to this issue, such as Assadeck. This is why he would not, for the time being, capitalize on his status.

Assadeck told me how the humanitarians explained the refugee community in the meeting where they announced the end of assistance that being a refugee does not

174. Light-skinned women seemed to be less often targeted, and none of my women informants experienced that, though one of Betty's relative was shouted at while at the market.

mean being poor; “they told us we didn't leave because of misery, but because of war. […] I brought some money with me, but since I'm not working I'll run out at some point…” (22/10/2015). When he told me that, I was quite surprised at his honesty about having financial means, because it is something I had not encountered in my previous research in the refugee camp; I knew that some families were wealthy, but they always told me they did not have any means, being a refugee was a financial hurdle, and so on. Assadeck started struggling financially towards the end of my fieldwork; his savings were running out. He could put the money given by the facilitated return to good use, but would not apply for it, as he was too afraid of losing the shield the refugee card came to represent for him. This shield operated in multiple ways.

The refugees had a meeting with UNHCR and CONAREF following the terrorist attack in Ouagadougou in January 2016. “They told us about the importance of always, always carrying our refugee IDs, even in the toilets, especially because of the attacks” (Assadeck, 01/02/2016). The CONAREF representative in Bobo-Dioulasso told me how during that meeting they also advised the refugees, especially light-skinned ones, “to avoid moving around, avoid going to isolated spaces/areas, avoid going to clubs and *maquis*, at least for a bit, so as to avoid entering into fights and people potentially becoming violent towards them” (02/02/2016). Some people, like Assadeck, embraced this advice and the refugee ID became a very powerful symbol for him, a proof of innocence.

> “Burkinabè are crazy, they right away shared the information that the attackers were Tuareg, without the information

> actually being checked or confirmed.[175] The day after I went to the city and people kept saying bad things at me. […] those people are just terrorists, it has nothing to do with Islam, nothing! Now people say the terrorists are Tuareg, they are within us, they say that before we [refugees] came they [Burkinabè] had nothing of the kind. We're not at ease here, not at ease, not at ease. But we've got the status. We always need to have the card, to show during checks and stuff. Some even wear it as a necklace, to show we're refugees" (Assadeck, 01/02/2016).

He then went out for his mid-afternoon prayer and when he came back in we had the third tea; he was more silent than usual. "When you look like someone who attacks stuff of others and other people, you're not at ease" (01/02/2016), and being able to show that you are a refugee and not one of them helps, according to him. "It's the refugee card that protects you here. Being a Tuareg, if you haven't got the card you're a terrorist to them" (08/07/2016). For this sense of protection that Assadeck draws from the refugee card, he will not 'sell' it, even if he desperately needs that money. As such, Assadeck's embodied experience of the refugee status changed; from a legal status that would provide him with assistance and international protection, it became the means to prove his distance from terrorist groups operating in the Sahel region.

During my time in fieldwork, Assadeck, as most of my informants, developed a critical and quite angry attitude towards UNHCR and its partner organisations. For

175. It was later said in the news that three men were identified: two black, one Arab; there was probably another male attacker, of un-clarified origins, and maybe two women. No Tuareg was officially accused of being one of the attackers.

him too, applying for return but staying in Bobo-Dioulasso and therefore gaining some money doing that, gradually appeared to seem the only remaining way to get some support out of their refugehood, as he repeated various times. Yet, because of the current political situation in the Sahel region and his race, he cannot sell his refugee status. For him, there is something attached to it that XOF35,000 cannot give him: a proof of innocence. The commodification of refugeeness can therefore also depend on racial dynamics and does not affect people in the same way. For Assadeck, financial needs and the opportunity to capitalize on the status did not prevail over his desire for feeling safe and socially accepted in Burkina Faso.

Assadeck's story and the racialized dimension of his daily existence in Burkina Faso highlights another aspect of my informants' lived realities, therefore showing once more how complex, contextual, and diverse they are. This further underlines the need to acknowledge these diversities and complexities when studying (forced) migrations if we want such studies to be accurate. Looking at the trajectories and shapes the refugee status and category take, and performing such analyses through the lenses of commodification processes, allows us to unveil such heterogeneity throughout the experience of displacement – or at least parts of this. Indeed, assessing the experience of individuals in relation to capitalizing on their status, makes us ask questions about how refugeeness is lived differently by different actors in different contexts, and about empirical, theoretical and normative ideas of 'the refugee', which other analytical frameworks would not necessarily allow. This is because commodification processes are never self-evident and linear, they are complex and it is important to link 'things' with the meanings people give to them. In addition, behind every commodification, there is production; yet this can get concealed in the

process. What my discussions above show is that by looking at refugees' daily practices and constraints, their actions, the challenges they face, the issues they have at heart, approaching these as aspects participating – or not – in the reproduction of the refugee status as capital, and bringing them to light, we can understand when, why, and how the refugee status transmutes into an economic asset within the lived realities of refugees in Burkina Faso.

CONCLUSION

This chapter has continued discussing how 'commodification' and 'capitalization' can be meaningful in analysing the making of the refugee category and refugeeness, and their negotiation and reproduction, in Burkina Faso. I suggested and argued that asset, or capital, are useful terms to understand what the refugee status and refugeeness came to represent for Malian refugees in today's refugee regime. Additionally, using a commodification approach to look at how the status and category move, circulate, and change in that context reveals the variety of experiences that urban refugees live, and how humanitarian interventions intersect with those realities by reinforcing existing inequalities among the communities they are supposed to support. Though these organisations acknowledge vulnerability, they fail to identify it in the places where it so patently manifests. The story of Assadeck in particular, and the other ethnographic insights in general, also showed how a capitalist logic and neoliberal ideals, are not universal forces that take over every aspect of aid and the refugees' experiences, but rather are mediated in a variety of social and political economies. Some people are better placed to negotiate with them and therefore better placed in the hierarchies of refugees.

The transformation of the refugee status, the various meanings and shapes it takes in Burkina Faso, culminates in its contestation. By being capitalized upon, its gets further and further away from what it sets out to be, a legal and normative status[176] that also represents certain ideals (of who is a refugee[177]). Refugeeness, in the Burkinabè context, by being reproduced through commodification processes by the various actors involved, subverts the asymmetrical relationships underlying humanitarianism and simultaneously contests what the international community expects from refugees. Whether these expectations are still vulnerability and passivity, or entrepreneurship, what I analysed in this chapter can be seen as a contestation of both. Indeed, 'the neoliberal refugee' as made up by the refugees in their own terms, and within their context – such as the capitalization of the status, for those who can – do not correspond to the former, and is not accepted as a valid way of attaining the latter.

Nevertheless, the subversion and transformation of the status and category does not take place in the same way for every urban refugee in Bobo-Dioulasso, it depends on intersecting factors, and can end up reinforcing inequalities and hierarchies among the refugees I met. The benefit of using a commodification approach and anthropology of capital-ism here is that they underline how these processes and their outcomes for refugees are influenced by (even partially) structuring and socio-cultural contexts. Not everyone can negotiate those contexts in the same manner: the impacts of the label and humanitarian regime and the ways in which the category can

176. Zetter (2007, 176) defines international legal protection as "the core attribute of being a refugee," and this 'feature' is also highlighted through Loescher's (2001) work.
177. "Society has always had certain expectations of the poor – what they are and what they should be, how they behave and should behave" (Fassin 2012, 65), and the same can be said for 'the refugee'. I am mostly referring to mainstream and societal discourse, but the same can be said for academic work, where often refugees are either perceived as being unilaterally dominated by the humanitarian system, or depicted as impressively resilient strategists without considering in more detail how much difference there is within 'the refugees'.

be transformed and negotiated by the refugees themselves depend on what composes the migrants' histories. This shows, once again, how there is not such a thing as '*the* refugee experience': *a* refugee experience is to be situated within larger and historicized structural forces and socio-political realities. Mass programmes will always struggle to reach their goals; they are applied to humans, who share some characteristics and in this case a legal status, but who are positioned in societies in immensely different ways.

I want to conclude this chapter with a quote recalling the literature introduced in this chapter:

> "Too often we let ourselves be swayed by theoretical orthodoxy, and we stop noticing. We assume the success of capitalist discipline; capitalism, we think, remade the world in the nineteenth century, and now all it has to do is chug forward like a locomotive on its tracks. Too often, scholars just want to follow around the railroad engineers. The not-thought-through world they helped make is far more curious" (Tsing 2013, 39).

As I hope this chapter made clear, as important as discussing seemingly generalised trends can be, discussing the ways in which things, realities, or relations are not commodified, or when they are commodified in unconventional or unexpected ways is equally fundamental.[178] These peculiar dynamics are mostly illustrating of the tendencies of the current refugee regime, as well as its contradictions.

178. After all, as Tsing (2013, 38) said, capitalism is messy, and that "is both its strength and its vulnerability".

I now turn to broader representations of 'the refugee' in the humanitarian context in Burkina Faso, by looking at how the category is discursively reproduced by the various actors involved. This ultimately illustrates once more how difference and hierarchies are created within/by the refugee regime and how refugees are differently situated to negotiate with their category.

6.

'THE REFUGEE' REPRESENTED: VULNERABILITY AS A PROOF OF DESERVINGNESS

La parole n'est pas une colline, elle se déplace[179]

INTRODUCTION

This last chapter addresses 'the refugee represented'. As explained in the prologue, my project started out as an investigation of the discursive differentiation humanitarians made between refugees. Yet I ended up looking at how the refugee category can be made up by various actors through commodification processes, focusing on economic anthropology and regimes of structural inequalities more than I anticipated. However, the goal still remained to eventually also show how inequalities and hierarchies can be created between refugees through the ways in which the category 'refugee' is represented.

In this chapter I look at the discursive constructions of 'the refugee' in Burkina Faso, from both the Malians and humanitarians' perspectives. I insert these into daily practices of the refugees, and show how the representations humanitarians have and that refugees partly take up, are problematic. Voices from critical feminist literature[180] underlined the importance of recognising the diversity of forced migrants' lives. Works taking into account gender and gender relations within migratory trajectories increased from the end of the 1990's,[181] but few ethnographies seek to understand how pre-existing and mutually constituting structures and identity markers (such as gender, race, class, religion, sexual orientation) intersect in refugees' lives

179. Malian say: A word is not a hill, it moves/changes.
180. In particular the introduction of intersectional analysis (Collins 2000).
181. E.g. Lammers 1999; Hajdukowsky-Ahmed et al. 2008; Fiddian-Qasmiyeh 2014a, 2014b; Kaiser 2016.

and categorisation processes, as these structures (can) have a more determining influence on people's existences than just their migratory movement. As I showed in Chapter 5, without considering regimes of structural inequalities, one cannot understand the refugees' experiences. Yet, as I show in this chapter, the mainstreamed discursive practices coming from the refugee regime reduce the heterogeneity of societies and people to a one-dimensional figure/category. I demonstrate this by highlighting how the refugees use that de-contextualised 'compassionist discourse' during our first meetings, but I then contrast it with their daily lives and the actual hardships and difficulties they encounter. Following, I argue that the way in which the refugee regime understands vulnerability (the term used to discriminate between refugees, as resources are nowadays 'scarce') is equally one-dimensional besides stating otherwise, as a decontextualised conceptualisation of 'vulnerability' is used as a defining and legitimising feature of 'the refugee'. By this I mean that the way in which 'vulnerability' is conceived by UNHCR in Burkina Faso does not take into sufficient consideration how different vulnerabilities take shape in that context and what can cause them, reinforce them, or protect from them, and how they vary between different individuals. Hierarchies and inequalities are consequentially created among the refugee community, which are exacerbated by the current refugee regime in unjust and exclusionary outcomes for the people the regime is supposed to protect.

By looking into these representations, the chapter's aim is also to unveil power relations and structures embedded in discursive practices surrounding the refugee category and the hierarchies they create and legitimise within a category. It simultaneously reveals the linkages and tensions between what is expected from refugees, by humanitarians but also refugees themselves. Furthermore it shows how

the forced migrants' lived experiences, their 'actual' daily lives do not fit with the simplified mainstream representations that are linked with the refugee category.

Before progressing this analysis, the chapter opens with a brief overview of the literature I use to analyse representational practices and discourse. Continuing, I propose a somehow complementary way of thinking about these issues, one that leaves more space to look at how the categorised or labelled actors themselves participate in creating certain images and representations. The empirical part of the chapter starts by looking at the ways refugees themselves describe and perceive what 'being a refugee' is like. I then turn to the humanitarians and how they represent 'the refugee', particularly by focusing on their proponents and simplification in seizing 'vulnerability'. This brings me to argue that among humanitarians, there persists the idea, from what I witnessed, that 'real' refugees are those living in camps, who are dispossessed and in need of help. This is connected with the creation of hierarchies that takes place in the humanitarian context I studied and that I explore next. An in-depth analysis of the core concept used to represent the 'real refugee' – vulnerability – demonstrates how hierarchies of refugeeness in Burkina Faso are justified based on economic and seemingly Western notions of vulnerability. By the latter I mean that 'vulnerability' is conceptualised by UNHCR starting from simplified Western ideas, norms, and values[182] of, for example, marriage, whereby two married people live in the same physical space, and therefore a married woman cannot experience the same difficulties as a single woman. In addition, 'vulnerability' is used and understood in a very one-dimensional way also in deciding how to assist refugees in Burkina Faso,

182. Originating from mainstream Western European and North American societies – all the while being aware that those are not monolithic and uniform entities and societies in regard to idea(l)s, values, and norms.

which coupled with the changes in 2016 for urban refugees in Bobo-Dioulasso, ended up doing more harm than good.

RATIONALE FOR DECONSTRUCTING 'THE REFUGEE'

Forced migration and refugee studies have had a focus on questioning and deconstructing the representations accompanying the refugee category in a variety of contexts (humanitarian, media, policies) since the discipline's beginning. This interest stems from the understanding that how a group or individual belonging to a category are understood, treated, or 'dealt with' is interlinked with how they are talked about and represented by those in positions of power/hegemony. This idea has been particularly developed by the adoption of Foucault's works, who saw discourse – and therefore categorization processes and representations as well – as a vector to construct and share knowledge about a specific population. Knowledge is an essential component in his analysis of power and governmentality. Indeed, looking at the governmentalities targeting a population does not involve solely analysing governing institutions, but also practices, knowledge, and discourses. The latter needs to be treated as "practices that systematically form the objects of which they speak" (Foucault 1972, 49) and form hegemonic 'truth regimes'. 'Truth regimes' are linked with the idea 'regime of veridiction', which is "the set of rules enabling one to establish which statements in a given discourse can be described as true or false" (Foucault 2008, 35). Considering "under what conditions and with what effects a veridiction is exercised" (36) can tell us which conditions were/are necessary to hold a precise discourse, what is 'taken for granted' on a precise issue – like who is a refugee. In other words, what, how, why, or who has the power to define and qualify

'truthfully' a certain issue.[183] Lamers (2005, 43), building on Foucault and Hall (1997), explains that "knowledge does not limit itself to pure meaning or language because it always operates within a historically embedded social practice." We cannot separate knowledge and discourse from relations of power. It is very important to stress that knowledge and discourse are situated; they are specific to particular historical, social, and political contexts and instances.

We thus have long established that discourses and categories, although inevitable, are neither neutral nor objective. Discourses "create not only knowledge but also the very reality they appear to describe" (Said 1979, 74). Talking about 'the refugee' in a certain way makes 'the refugee' that way. Categories are a product and mirror of (unbalanced) power relations, and representations of those result in justifying inequalities and discriminations, creating hierarchies and invisibility. "[F]raming and labelling processes are linked to the distribution of social, political and economic power, they are critical for securing hegemonic meanings and values" (Moncrieffe and Eyben, 2007, 2). Therefore a category like 'the refugee', and particularly the representations and discourses built around it, can become an unquestioned 'truth', resulting in normalising and legitimising different practices and actions targeting those labelled in a particular way. A certain understanding, discourse, and knowledge of 'the refugee' results in making every person in that category 'a refugee': the whole person and story is reduced to that. Furthermore, if a (legally recognised) refugee does not fit into that representational box, she may be excluded from certain assistance/intervention measures otherwise implemented for 'refugees'.

183. Foucault (2008, 36) uses the example of issues such as madness, delinquency, and sex: "It would consist in saying that the problem is to bring to light the conditions that had to be met for it to be possible to hold a discourse on madness – but the same would hold for delinquency and sex – that can be true or false according to the rules of medicine, say, or of confession, psychology, or psychoanalysis".

It is hence especially important to analyse discourses coming from individuals and organisations in position of authority, 'official' representations of hegemonic/dominant nature (Fiddian-Qasmiyeh 2014b, 13), because these are more likely to have an impact (be it in terms of policies, aid distribution or legal status attribution) on the groups represented in a certain way. In my case, I see humanitarian organisations, especially UNHCR, as the most authoritative actor producing discourse and knowledge on refugee issues. Although her work looked at norm making, Fresia (2014, 514) shows how UNHCR's "narratives produce a hegemonic 'truth regime' on refugee issues." In the anthropology of forced migration, problematizing and deconstructing the category and/or label of 'refugee' has thus been one of the main aims since the 1980's. Waldron (1987) and Harrell-Bond (1986) initiated discussions of the negative implications the category 'refugee' seemed to have on refugees' lives due to representations the humanitarian workers had towards them. Echoing Harrell-Bond, Malkki's (1992, 1995a, 1996) work explained how humanitarian practices and discourses have homogenized, depoliticized and dehistoricized the 'refugee'. This is also because refugees have mostly been depicted by humanitarian organizations and media as "a miserable sea of humanity" (Malkki 1996, 377), passive, and without voice and individuality. Following the work of Zetter (1988, 1991), other authors have discussed the effects of victimizing and simplistic representations that the bureaucratic label 'refugee' invokes.[184] These works urge us to take into account history, politics, social context, and to move beyond the generalizing effects of the category 'refugee'. Importantly, it has been established that representations of and discourses around 'the refugee' are historically and politically situated and constructed (Cole 2016; Fiddian-Qasmiyeh 2014b; Fresia 2009; Malkki 1995b).

184. E.g. Agier 2002; 2008; Coulter 2001; Fresia 2009; Chatty 2010.

However, it should be noted that 'hegemonic', 'authoritative', 'official' discourses do not imply the impossibility of contestation or contradiction. On the contrary, discourses "may contradict or compete with each other, at times being examples of resistance to dominant portrayals and modes of being" (Fiddian-Qasmiyeh 2014b, 13). Foucault himself noted (1994) that the apparently oppressed actors can produce and/or participate in governmentalities too, and through 'mundane' practices and discourses. He also said that where there is power there is resistance. This has been looked at in two main ways in forced migration studies: either by looking at refugees' livelihood strategies (not necessarily discursive ones) as refugees' 'resistance' or subversion practices; or, as refugees performing and reproducing the humanitarian narrative about their category for their 'goals' (without necessarily embracing a Foucauldian approach and therefore seeing this as refugees reproducing that same governmentality).

Concerning the first way, showing the agency, resilience and normalcy[185] in forced migrants' lives, is the aim of the majority of work looking at refugees' livelihood strategies, contestation and resistance.[186] 'Refugees' strategies' is used as an umbrella term capturing a variety of practices such as resistance, subversion, re-appropriation, or innovation happening in camps and self-settled contexts – though the latter contexts have been less studied. Overall, scholars focusing on these issues show us "the adaptive, agentive capacities of refugees and other displaced persons" (McConnachie 2014, 8). Underlying refugees' livelihood strategies has proved fundamental in recognising forced migrants' agency and show how they are not a helpless group of victims, without voice, place, and subjectivity (Agier 2008, 101-

185. I am by no means implying that refugees are not 'normal', I am using this term to contrast existing literature focused too much on the exceptionality of refugees and refugeeness.
186. The works I drawn on are: Waldron 1987; Conquergood 1988; Malkki 1995a; Turner 2001; Turton and Marsden 2002; Monsutti 2005b; Fábos and Kibreab 2007; Fresia 2004, 2009; Agier 2008, 2010; Oesch 2012; and McConnachie 2014.

102), as popular and humanitarian representations of refugees can depict. However, what has been less researched is how such agency plays out, what 'agency' means, and how it can mean different things for different refugees. To do so, we must first acknowledge that agency is not purely confrontational and resistance-based, and needs to be situated in a multi-dimensional context.

When refugees' strategies are discussed, these are often described as acts of open resistance or contestation to the humanitarian regime. This seems to be implicitly representative of (all) refugees' agency. The apparently logical links between agency and resistance could also be supported by the use of the concept in that it is often studied in relation to 'subordinate', 'oppressed', 'vulnerable', or 'dominated' groups. When agency is discussed in forced migration and refugee studies, it is always about refugees' agency (supposedly the 'underprivileged group' in our studies). It is argued that refugees are actors with potentialities and aspirations; they can confront the "device of power" in which they are caught. This could explain why often, in this field of study as well as in others, agency is then equated with resistance and confrontation. I think this is just a partial picture and simplified understanding of agency. Ortner's take on agency (2006) introduces the role that power can play, and the fact that there is always agency, but this can be more or less constrained – or enabled – by the context in which the agents find themselves, as well as social and power relations characterising that context. The existing constraints the refugees can experience are not only to be looked at as coming from the humanitarian aid regime; the refugees' lived contexts are much larger than that, as I showed in Chapter 5.

The second way in which in the literature has more or less explicitly shown how refugees participate in their discursive governmentalities, is through analyses of how they 'perform' their role as refugees. In other words, how the refugees themselves do

reproduce similar discourses and representations than the humanitarian ones. This has been understood as a 'chosen strategy' of refugees to reach specific goals,[187] or as incorporated in their discourses and partly used to explain their experiences of displacement, therefore not as a conscious strategy of 'subversion'.

Szczepanikova (2010) shows in her work how refugees in Czech Republic performed refugeeness as they thought it was expected from them by NGO supporting them. This happened on the one hand as a consequence of repeated narratives coming form the NGOs and humanitarianism about what the (gendered) experience of 'the refugee' is like, and who is a refugee, or who a refugee should be: "refugees acts as performers in a play written by others" (Szczepanikova 2010, 471). On the other hand, this author also shows how refugees and humanitarians used the representations she studied in a strategic way. Yet, the stereotyped representations eventually made it harder for everyone that did not correspond to those to be socially (and at times legally) recognised as a refugee, and for a significant variety of lived experiences to be considered as legitimate. Similarly, Inhetveen (2006) looks at a 'micro-level' how refugees living in a camp in Zambia appropriate or not the refugee category and which characteristics they attach to it. She explains how humanitarian agencies bring to the camp "the figure of the suffering and vulnerable refugee" (Inhetveen 2006, 10), and everybody is familiar with it. This figure of a suffering person is a cultural construction, and not a legal figure (Ibid., 11), and "the camp population employs the concept, in a purposive way. People use it not only for interpreting their own experiences, but also to influence the decision-making

187. Fassin for instance tells us, in relation to the representations of 'victims' needing humanitarian assistance or intervention, that "the individuals in question tend to conform to this portrait, knowing that it will have an impact on public opinion, and thus offer to the humanitarian agents the part of their experience that feeds the construction of them as human beings crushed by fate" (2007, 517).

processes among the very agencies that stand for the labelling of people as 'refugees'" (Ibid., 10).

Looking at how the refugees themselves use the representations attached to the label and take them on to make sense or describe their experiences, fits with Polzer's call to include the refugees' perspective in studying categorization processes that concern them. Polzer argues that "categorization is always an engagement between groups of actors" (2008, 479), and that "people in the group being defined can take part in and respond to the categorization process in several ways. In the case of both institutional and social categorizations, they can embrace it, internalize it or instrumentalize it, or they can resist and subvert it (Scott 1985; 1998)" (Polzer 2008, 479-480).

I agree that categorization processes happen in negotiations, or interactions. Hacking (1999, 10) looks into classifications and social constructions – more precisely, the "social constructions of what?" He shows how "a specific kind of person" (the example he uses being 'the woman refugee') is socially constructed: "Or simply, the *idea* of the woman refugee is constructed" (Hacking 1999, 10). As he explains, ideas do matter. This is because the matrix in which an idea is constructed does affect an individual person and not only the idea. Such a matrix is made in interactions, as "[w]ays of classifying human beings interact with the human beings who are classified. […] People think of themselves as of a kind, perhaps, or reject the classification. […] classifications do not exist only in the empty space of language but in institutions, practices, material interactions with things and other people" (Ibid., 31). Hacking has two main arguments: one I agree with, and the second one less so. The first one is that the classification of 'refugee' becomes a kind of person, and does not point to individual refugees. The second one, that I take issue with, is

that because such individuals are classified in a specific way, “their experiences of themselves are changed by being so classified” (Hacking 1999, 11), to the point of changing “how some women refugees feel about themselves, their experiences, and their actions” (Ibid.). It may be so, at some level, but, at least in my research, 'the refugee experience' was far from being 'a thing', and the reification of specific narratives usually happened during first meetings and encounters – with me – or when refugees were dealing with actors or situations linked with the refugee regime. I agree with Hacking's point that people classified in a certain way do participate in the making of the classification, as they are in interaction with the matrix of that idea. However, I have some reservations. I do not think they only participate in it by taking on the overall idea generated in the matrix. In other words, if there's a certain idea of 'the refugee' created in its matrix, in refugeeness, this can be simplified as either being a vision of 'the refugee' as being a suffering person, a passive victim, a vulnerable person, or as a resilient entrepreneur. Yet refugees do participate into the making of the category not only by somehow 'complying' with the mainstream idea of it, they participate in it by also shifting said idea, in some cases even by subverting that mainstream figure generated in the matrix. They can participate in that making in many ways, without needing to comply with a supposed 'refugee experience' symbolised in that idea, in the sense of their subjectivity becoming a 'refugee subjectivity'.

Indeed, supporting Turton's argument (2003), I maintain that it is problematic when, in academic research, an attempt is made to define 'the refugee experience' (Lacroix 2004; Moussa 1993), as if there were a tangible and fixed essence that forced migrants share besides the legal status, like a subjectivity. If subjectivity is “the conscious and unconscious thought and motions of the individual, her sense of

herself and her ways of understanding her relation to the world" (Weedon 1987, 32), as well as "the cultural and social formations that shape, organize, and provoke those modes of affect, thought, and so on" (Rose 1999, 57, cited by Ortner 2006, 107), then refugeeness is not what influences it most significantly. Constructions and classifications like 'refugee' are made up and performed differently/for different goals and with different constraints by the various actors involved. Some actors (UNHCR, or borders) have more control over the way such categories are made up – but all participate nonetheless.

Studies looking at how refugees themselves reproduce, perform, or represent their legal categories have too often been un-nuanced, intervening at a general level to explore bureaucratic categories, whilst failing to consider the complex and multifaceted way that refugee 'identities' are created, maintained, and contested.[188] They also fail to consider the diverse ways in which, in this case refugees can, cannot, want, or do not to want negotiate with the category by not considering how these dynamics intersect with the refugees' lives. On a similar line, the approaches I mentioned above, depicting refugees as a whole and resisting the humanitarian system, or being entirely controlled by it, also remain at a general level. This is also because by focusing excessively on concepts such as domination/oppression or resistance, we may end up giving salience to issues that the refugees themselves may not experience or that they perceive as less significant. Similarly, by just looking at discourses held by the refugees and reproducing the refugee regime's narrative and governmentality, we risk missing out on the broader context in which they are to be inserted. There is more to the way in which the refugees themselves make up their

188. Yet in this chapter I will do something similar, meaning that in Chapter 5 I looked at how the refugees themselves negotiate in different ways, if at all, with the category, according to various regimes of structural inequalities. Here I will look in more detail at the general representational level, from the refugees' side, but then also, and mostly, from the humanitarian side, by looking at how certain discursive practices play out ethnographically.

category than just reproducing specific discourses, as I show in this work. That needs to be contextualised in their lives and more broadly in the current humanitarian regime in which they take place. Humanitarians' discourses and representations in Burkina Faso remains highly generalised, stereotypical, and simplistic, which means their operationalization will most likely have shortcomings (for example via failed programmes), as reality is much more complex and can not be captured in such discourses and ideals.

Looking at how categories are created by the actors more concerned by them is a good entry point to uncover larger tendencies of the issue we look into, in this case the refugee regime.[189] I believe that this has not been developed enough in refugee studies. In order to understand such negotiations, and how the refugees themselves negotiate and live their category, ethnographic research is key. As it will become clear below, through repeated encounters and most often unstructured ones, the compassionist/victimising narratives my interlocutors offered me in our first meetings were nuanced by later discourses and, importantly, daily practices and the opportunities they had or did not have. Indeed, similarly to what Inhetveen highlights (2006, 11) "the compassionist utilization of being a refugee, and thereby suffering and vulnerable, is likely to be the first one the researcher [especially if white] will encounter." Yet, as weeks and months went by, I saw how their lives and experiences were much more complex than that simplified and homogenised narrative. Additionally, contrasting demands and thus constructions coming from UNHCR and

189. Looking at how a 'particular kind' participates into the making of her category is what Andersson does; "despite this being an ethnography of an industry, the migrants have been given a prominent place in the chapters, as actors and coanalysts of the system in which they find themselves stranded" (Andersson 2014, 286). Andersson takes on Hacking's approach, which makes for a fruitful way of analysing how the migrants themselves participate in the system in which they are caught. Or, in other words, Andersson shows how "whether they succeed or fall short of their goals, these travellers increasingly end up collaborating in their own making as illegal immigrants on the infernal production line of the illegality industry" (Ibid., 3).

other institutional actors, also feed into the production of 'the refugee' in the Burkinabè context and how people can or cannot respond to it.

I now turn to the refugees' narratives, to show how they reappropriate the compassionist discourse, but I then situate those narratives within their lives and show how there is more than those simplified discourses and refugeeness in them.

"THEY ARE ORDINARY PEOPLE IN EXTRAORDINARY SITUATIONS"[190]

> "[T]he standard response to newcomers was to describe the hardships people faced as refugees. As one moved around the settlement and interviewed people in their houses, there was a litany of suffering as people complained of the lack of food, their struggle to sell their crops, or the injustice of paying school fees. This was interpreted by the agencies as an illustration of the refugees' dependency and lack of initiative, although this could be seen as refugees' strategy to maximize their benefits from the system" (Bakewell, 2000, 368).

Anticipated by other academics and my own previous research experience in a refugee camp in Burkina Faso, during the first meetings with my interlocutors I was expecting them to highlight the sufferings that being a refugee puts one through. I was not expecting it in a judgmental way, rather in a telling way. By this I mean that I do not take a discourse as 'true' or 'untrue', every discourse (or observation or practice) is meaningful in relation to the contexts in which it happens. When I say that most of my interlocutors gave me what could be termed 'the compassionist

190. CONAREF officer, 13/10/2015, Bobo-Dioulasso.

speech' during our first encounters, I am not saying that their discourse was false. Rather, I am saying that this does not necessarily reflect what I later picked up spending hours and days with them; I thus need to consider why that discourse was produced specifically in the instance of first meetings with the researcher/white person. Similarly, that discourse needs to be situated within the other narratives and practices I later observed. I now do this explicitly, by sharing my interlocutors' insights on the sufferings linked with 'being a refugee', and nuancing these statements with other information and stories they told me, or shared with me, at other times.

CONTRASTING NARRATIVES AND EXPERIENCES

"Who wants to be a refugee for his whole life? Being a refugee isn't sweet, there's everything in it, all the sufferings. Before you work, but then you get here, sit down only without doing anything" (01/02/2016). I later found out that this interlocutor did have a job, contrary to others. He was indeed a refugee, but was not spending his days "sitting down and doing nothing." This is just one example of how certain stereotypical representations of suffering commonly linked with being a refugee seem to 'take over' their own daily experiences when telling me about refugeehood. The idea expressed by this particular interlocutor about refugees just waiting all day long without doing anything, and having lost everything in the flight – a rather 'typical' one in common sense and humanitarian campaigns, and certainly the reality of many refugees worldwide – was shared by various Malians I met. However, this was mostly not their practical reality. In addition to having a job, I later could see that the main concern of the interlocutor I just cited was to not yet being married, as he was 'getting old'. He had a fiancée the year before I met him, in Bobo-Dioulasso, whom he loved

dearly – as he believed in romantic love, he told me many times.[191] But he found out that she was seeing someone else as well, and that broke his heart. He now does not trust women anymore, and does not want an arranged marriage, but that may be his only chance at having children, and there is less risk involved (in terms of feelings) in being hurt again. This topic kept coming up in our discussions, while the 'being a refugee is hard' only came up that one time.

The idea of refugees having nothing to do but waiting and coping with suffering was also underlined by Zeinab and her neighbour, during our first meeting (15/02/2016). Zeinab stressed how they need more financial help, as the burden of paying school bills for their children was very heavy for them. The underlying cause of that investment being heavy on them, she told me, was the fact that refugees cannot work and have nothing to do. Yet, as I said already, refugees can work in Burkina Faso. Indeed, for many of them getting a job can be hard, because some may not have a strong enough network of acquaintances, or are of lighter skin and may be discriminated for that. Actually, some of my interlocutors struggled to find a job, but the same is true for my local friends. Burkina Faso's unemployment, in both the formal and informal sector, is extremely high. The youth is especially touched by it, independently of their education. School fees are expensive for most parents, as the majority of the population is of low socio-economic class in the country. It is not just a specificity of refugeehood in Burkina Faso. Which is not the same to say that refugees are lying to me about their supposed hardship, just that this hardship is not specifically due to the fact that they are refugees.

191. I do not have space to develop this here, but this statement is to be inserted in the wider 'debate'/state of love and relationships as perceived and talked about by people aged around 16-30 I know in Burkina Faso (refugees and locals alike). I was told many times that "romantic love is a white thing," as they qualify it. Romantic love is not a luxury they can afford, in terms of being time-consuming, producing drama and involving too many feelings. "Here in Africa we work under what we call 'commercial love'" (Betty, 20/04/2016).

Another telling story is that of Ibrahim, the husband of one of my main informants, who told me that

> "Being a refugee isn't good. You suffer as you're not at home (*chez toi*), if you've got problems you don't know where to go and how to solve them, mostly because your family isn't here. And you've got no job. If you're just a migrant you do it for working, but when you're a refugee you just haven't got a job and you stay the whole day doing nothing, especially here in Africa" (28/04/2015).

Ibrahim would come only occasionally to Bobo-Dioulasso, and would normally reside in Kidal, Mali. He still was a registered refugee, and his close family was in Burkina Faso. Various other relatives of him also lived in Bobo-Dioulasso and some were neighbours. He had a job, a well paid one, in Kidal. Of course, not being with his wife and children, of whom he was fond, was not easy. For his wife, life could also be challenging as she could not work – not for rights issues, but rather as she was of middle/upper class and noble caste origins (Tuareg). As such she had never been expected to work and on top of this she regularly suffered from migraines. She thus spent most of her days on her own, as family members or acquaintances were out working or at school. She was not extremely close with her other neighbours and so she was quite lonely. Yet these specificities that made her daily life challenging, did not mirror her husband's speech on 'being a refugee', especially as he was talking about himself.

Another example that shows how the refugees talk about and thus make up their category and the representations going with it, without this necessarily corresponding to their daily experiences and how they feel about their lives, came from Assadeck. One day we where talking about what it means 'to be a refugee', and he was

explaining to me how refugees are mistreated; another common-sense interpretation, and often reality, for refugees. He said how "… we don't get any favour, being refugee is like being handicapped, you have no hands, no legs, etc. And you get mistreated" (17/12/2015).[192] Mistreated in which way, I asked. "For instance when a Burkinabè tells me I cannot sit somewhere particular, or that I must go back *chez moi*." I thus asked him how people could know automatically that he was a refugee; he thought about it for a while and then added that if they do not know you, they may not know you are a refugee, but they may ask you. In the following months, this idea of people telling him/them to go back home came back again, but every time it did, it was not in relation to him being a refugee. It was in relation to being a light-skinned Tuareg. For instance, he explained that he once was told to go home by a Malian who had been living in Burkina Faso for a long time, and when he told her he was a Malian just like her, she told him that Tuareg are not Malians and have no place there (in Burkina). This shows once again how refugees do take on specific narratives that are thought to be typical of refugees' experiences and by doing so they reproduce and reify these narratives. But this was mostly so in our first meetings, this being meaningful in relation to my position in the field. At least initially, I was associated with the organisations and humanitarians involved in the refugee situation and I was therefore provided with discourses that would prove the fact that the people I met were 'legitimate' refugees. With time passing, the certitude that I was not a humanitarian worker and had no links with humanitarian agencies grew and, significantly, trust increased and friendships developed as I was allowed to move beyond that discursive first layer. Assadeck, later on, also told me that "a refugee is

192. Interestingly, when I was doing research with camp refugees in 2013, one of my informants shared a similar idea – though directed to how UNHCR was treating them – when explaining to me how the human figure in the logo of UNHCR represents 'the refugee experience'. "They cut your feet, they cut your hands, and then they [UNHCR] tell you what to do and to open your mouth only to be fed; they pretend you cannot move without feet and you cannot do without hands" (15/07/2013).

not a poor person nor an ill one, it's just someone who moved because of war and is now here" (16/03/2016). A different take than the equation being a refugee is like being disabled.

When explicitly talking about Betty's experience of 'being a refugee', she said that "being refugees isn't easy… leaving your place… at home we were at ease, but here it is not easy" (20/10/2015 – it was our third meeting). That day we continued talking about other issues, and I stayed at her place the whole afternoon. Later on, she went back to discussing more generally about refugeehood and she mentioned how she had to study the Geneva Convention at some point during high school. She was the only one who ever mentioned to me the Geneva Convention and knew what UNHCR was before becoming a refugee. Yet she is also one of the only two interlocutors of mine who went to high school (but did not finish it). She added that being a girl (distinct from a woman, as she was not married then) who had been in Bobo-Dioulasso before and thus somewhat knew the city, made it easier. At the beginning of my fieldwork she had already decided that she was going to stay in Burkina Faso and that her life was there now. She thus had difficulties in Bobo-Dioulasso, but that was her home and it had felt like that for a while, as she said. The narrative of 'at home we were at ease, but here is not easy' that she first mentioned, did not seem to apply to her story, or at least not how she presented it and how I saw it in the time we spent together in the following months. There seems to be a disjuncture between the idea of 'refugee' as a generalised/collective state, and their individual lives and selves.

MAKING SENSE OF THEIR EXPERIENCES

If it may seem I am saying my interlocutors were complaining for no reason, that is not what I intend. I am saying they discursively perform, as it has been showed elsewhere by other authors, a certain narrative that is expected from them in mainstream discourses/understandings and from the humanitarian regime, which still demands refugees to be vulnerable and dispossessed. My interlocutors thus often reiterated images of what they understood as being the typical hardship experienced by refugees, 'inspired' by discourses of humanitarian workers with whom they had regular meetings especially when they first arrived, and also from what they could see on French TV – at least those who had one. If at first they seemed to explain their daily and long-term problems in term of their refugeehood, their discourses changed. They were, most of them if not all, acutely aware that the difficulties they faced were not easily explained by one thing or 'condition'. And they were also aware that their lives were more than just 'being refugees' and the compassionist discourse was not used to interpret or talk about their daily experiences.

Thus, my informants' everyday realities and discourses were somehow different than what they explicitly discussed as 'being a refugee'. It is as if they did indeed make 'the refugee' into a compassionist figure, but only when talking explicitly about it and at a general level, as opposed to a personal and individualised one. When they talked about their own experience in specific and personal terms, the 'refugee-victim' was not there. Some actively decided to distance themselves from this figure. Betty told me during another afternoon that “being a refugee isn't easy, I became an autochthone.” Is it better? I asked. “It's better. The life of refugees you see when you leave for Djibo and you see it's not easy” (22/03/2016). There is this idea that being a refugee is a difficult situation and is well represented by those living in camps (as in

the camp in Djibo, in the north of Burkina Faso) and thus it is better to move away from that mindset. In addition to Betty, Sidi also explicitly said that he decided to 'quit being a refugee', if not legally, at least symbolically. He said that a few weeks after arriving in Bobo-Dioulasso in 2012, he realised that the Malian crisis was going to last. “I removed return from my head and I started working” (16/03/2015). In his opinion, refugees do hold onto the idea of 'returning home' too much, and this paralyses them. This is why he stepped out the refugee mind-set and started building a business.

Most of my informants also thought, and expressed it verbally, that their situation was not necessarily worst than that of non-refugees in Mali and Burkina. For instance, when sharing the difficulties faced in their daily life, they would relate those to the great lack of earning opportunities in Burkina Faso, and not relate such hardship to the fact that they are refugees. Fatoumata told me how “when you say it's not easy, it is like in Mali, everywhere it's not easy, there are difficulties, but here at least you've got peace and it helps. It is hard, but you juggle, either here or in Mali. Here we feel like brothers and sisters with the locals, we're good” (18/04/2016). Similarly, Aminata once explained me how “I don't find a difference between being one [refugee] and not, we're in a brother country, I feel as if I'd be living in Mali. Before there was some food and we were very well taken care of, now there isn't anymore but it is liveable, and I hope we'll have something again at some point” (20/04/2016).

The fact that my interlocutors did take up a certain image of 'the refugee' when talking generally about that figure is perceivable not only in the suffering narrative they share, but also in other stereotypical representations of what a refugee should feel/act/be like. Indeed, in their imaginary of what non-refugees may think of

refugees, additional assumptions were projected. For instance, Betty knew she was planning to stay in Burkina Faso even if the crisis in Mali stopped – and she has now married a Burkinabè and is building a house with him, making her plan even more materialised. Still, when applying for a job, she would omit the fact she was a refugee, and if asked, she would show the potential employer her Malian ID card or passport. This is because "if they see you're a refugee they think you won't be staying long… One day you'll go back and just stop working, or that they call you back [from Mali] and you have to go" (Betty, 14/05/2016). In addition to 'refugee' being associated with temporariness, another informant also linked this status, and therefore his category, to a lack of seriousness/commitment, in particular if linked with business intentions.[193] Indeed, he also only showed his Malian ID card when going to banks asking for loans or making investments, as "I'm in business, it looks better to just be Malian" (16/03/2016).

The refugee ID card, the proof of being a refugee, in these two instances signal certain mainstream representations accompanying the image of refugee: a temporary dimension and instability/triviality.[194] However, locals who are not neighbours or do not know Malian refugees, are most likely unaware of what 'a refugee' is (unless they went to high school and studied it there); they are aware of Malians having moved to Bobo-Dioulasso as a consequence of the conflict and hardship arising from that, but not of the specific term. My Burkinabè friends, except those working in the humanitarian or development sector, and having gone to university, did not know who/what a refugee was before we talked about it. The uses Betty and the other informant make of their cards show how 'being a refugee' means a certain set of

193. This is particularly interesting in light of what has been discussed in Chapter 4, and 'working as a durable solution'.
194. Another dimension that comes up as a characteristic of 'refugee' in my interlocutors' imaginaries is innocence, as seen in Assadeck's story in Chapter 5; this can also be linked with the suffering and compassionist image.

representations and have specific characteristics. They do, in this way, make up 'the refugee' as it is in the mainstream made up particularly in Western discourses and conceptualisations. Another idea that the refugees take up from the humanitarians, concerning characteristics that should make them up, is the fact that camp refugees are vulnerable ones, while urban ones are less so, or not at all. I will come back to this further below, but as it will mostly be coming from the humanitarian perspective, I want to share here this thought from Ongoïba: "they don't consider us anymore as refugees. But even if we're urban refugees there are people who really struggle" (27/05/2016).

These reproduced and performed images are without doubt linked with what I discussed in Chapter 4 – the production of certain representations for institutional survival by humanitarian agencies – but also the way some humanitarians in the field seemed to perceive aid and refugees.[195] In addition to the 'motherly relation' I mention in Chapter 5, during my previous research in 2013 and 2014, field workers were often complaining about Tuareg refugees being too demanding, not satisfied with the aid received and too mobile. To them, a 'deserving refugee' was a grateful and unchallenging one, a passive one, who would not dare to ask for more than what she already had/received (Bardelli 2015). Therefore, the various representations and ideals coming from humanitarians, in a variety of way – discourses, campaigns, assistance measures – are in part taken up by the refugees themselves. Yet, contrary to what Hacking seems to say, in Burkina Faso urban refugees do not to filter their experience through that; it remains more on a discursive level (as it is perceivable from the 'contrasting' accounts I provided above), a general/collective level that does

195. Fresia shows how the victimising approach, the fact that refugees become a "pure victim, without past nor present" (2009, 45) is intrinsic in the humanitarian space, where humanitarian assistance programmes are carried out with a conceptualised-as-homogenous mass of refugees.

not seem to affect them personally, or they create distance from it and explain how they decided to use another 'mindset'.[196]

The fact that categorised people, or targeted people, take on discourses used or promoted by actors or institutions who are in a higher position of power – in relation to allocating resources, or giving rights – is not surprising, as it has been showed by other authors too. As I said above, Inhetveen (2006) and Szczepanikova (2010) (and Sigona too, 2014), are some of the authors who have shown how specific discourses can be reappropriated by groups and they can do that in strategic ways. Andersson (2014) also does something similar in his larger work on the industry and construction of illegality, relying on Hacking, to show how migrants themselves "actively participate in their making as migrants" (Andersson 2014, 15) through a variety of interactions and intersections between classificatory systems of human beings and the experiences of people classified as such. The 'strategic' use my interlocutors had of the stereotyped representations was only in relation to delivering the 'compassionist speech' in the first meetings. This was thought to be needed to legitimise their status, which is in their collective imaginary associated with being a vulnerable victim – despite not needing to actually feel like/be one.

Similar dynamics might be observable in the future in regard to the neoliberal/entrepreneur refugee. By this I mean that people may perform or reify that image, but not everyone will have the resources, network, or knowledge to do that, as I showed in the previous chapters.[197] Indeed, Elyachar (2002) shows similar dynamics

196. I maintain that solely focusing on these 'superficial discourses' excludes the heterogeneity of experiences people being classified or defined in a specific way have, yet this may seem 'all there is' if one simply does not spend enough time with the actors, and tries to move beyond such discourse, or fails to insert this type of discourse in the larger systems that make it possible. This represents a methodological note in favour of ethnographic work, which allows for deeper connections and sharing of knowledge to take place.

197. See Sukarieh (2016) for interesting insights on the creation and performance of the neoliberal subject in Jordan in micro-credit training programmes.

in parts of her work, and uses it as a way to also demonstrate the problems of a neoliberal ideology behind development policies and interventions. When talking about beneficiaries of microcredit programmes performing a certain narrative and practices when donors where around to see 'what they helped doing', what was shown was “a neat and bounded performance of labor with roles easily identified and the smell of sweat kept at bay” (Elyachar 2002, 504). She also notes how, behind these 'performances', “[t]he microentrepreneurs themselves were often desperate. They had debts over their heads, banks on their backs demanding interest payments and refusing to release further instalments of the entrepreneurs' loans” (Ibid.). We are not there yet, in the sense that 'the Western neoliberal refugee', does not seem to be yet embodied/performed/reproduced in Bobo-Dioulasso, at least not as extensively as the compassionist figure. But, the apparent contradiction between wanting refugees to be vulnerable and entrepreneur at the same time is visible in Burkina Faso, at least in the context I studied, as the refugees still mostly reappropriate the victimizing discourse.

IDEALISED AND LIVED VULNERABILITY

The 'compassionist figure' just discussed is certainly persistent in the humanitarian context in Burkina Faso. I showed it especially as it is perceived and 'used' by the refugees, but it is also still very much present in the humanitarian discourse. Refugees (still) need to be perceived as vulnerable by humanitarians – in the sense of suffering and being dispossessed – to receive assistance in Burkina Faso. Vulnerability as used by the agencies in Burkina Faso is very narrowly conceived, and it is in itself an ambiguous term, which should probably be refined before being used as a key operational concept. Additionally, demands of vulnerability are today accompanied,

in the refugee regime, by demands of economic self-sufficiency and responsibility in succeeding in one's own durable solution. Indeed, despite the growing demand for refugees to be economically self-sufficient, which seems in stark contrast to the figure of dependent and passive refugees that characterise(d) the refugee regime for long, this latter figure is still significant in Burkina Faso. 'Vulnerability' in this context, is primarily used to prioritise between refugees, as funding is not sufficient to provide assistance to everyone. As this term is used as an operational one to decide who gets (additional) assistance, I consider it important to deconstruct and analyse it, as it turns out to be creating more inequality than it should, because of its decontextualized and stereotyped use and understanding. This issue, coupled with the tight box refugees are supposed to fit within, to get into self-sufficiency programs and be considered as 'good' independent refugees (discussed in Chapter 4) make for an even more unequal refugee regime. This is what I turn to next.

THE IDEAL VULNERABILITY OF THE IDEAL REFUGEE

An important element in and behind the compassionist image of 'the refugee' is vulnerability – 'vulnerable populations' and 'vulnerable refugees' are specifically targeted by agencies like UNHCR. As Inhetveen (2006, 15) explains, the "institutionalized figure of the refugee, as the administrative and legal point of reference for the international refugee regime and its agencies in the camps, is associated with a specific vulnerability," which corresponds to having lost the protection of the home country. Yet, in the context that I did my research, 'vulnerability' is now used both more specifically and broadly at the same time. More specifically, at least discursively, as it is used as a distinction between refugees,

contrary to Inhetveen's study where this characteristic of 'being a refugee' made it an 'equalizing category' (2006, 9). And more broadly, as it is never defined.

Indeed, vulnerability to what, and what it means in the refugee regime, is rarely deconstructed or explained. As I mentioned towards the end of Chapter 5, 'vulnerability' in the way it was used by UNHCR and its partner organisations in Burkina Faso does not take into account subtle/invisible forms of vulnerability, or precariousness. 'Vulnerability' is also used as the main characteristics to distinguish and justify different measures/treatments for urban and camp refugees,[198] as well as to designate who still receives assistance and who does not. Vulnerability seems to characterise the 'real refugees', the suffering subjects in need of humanitarian assistance (and not only in need of protection).

Scales of vulnerability, scales of deservingness, and scales of realness

> "Vulnerable people are always a priority in everything we do" (a UNHCR senior staff member told the refugees at a meeting in Bobo-Dioulasso, 16/10/2015)
>
> "We take care of those who are *really* vulnerable" (WFP staff member, 13/04/2016, Ouagadougou)

There seems to be a hierarchy of vulnerable refugees in Burkina Faso. 'Vulnerable' is a sub-category of UNHCR's (and its partner organisations) people of concern in the country. For this section, when I use 'vulnerable' I thus mean it as it

198. Self-settled refugees living in non-urban settings are seldom discussed in Burkina Faso; statistics show that there are some, and certainly there are many forced migrants from Mali living in rural areas that are not officially recognised as refugees. I focus on the urban-camp divide as this is the one I know and I've been more exposed too. See Bakewell 2014 for a discussion on the variety of non-camp 'configurations' and their study.

was used by the Agency. 'Vulnerable refugees' are in that context classified as *personnes aux besoins spécifiques*, people with specific needs (PSN). When I talk about 'scale', I mean a hierarchy between refugees based on their *supposed* needs and vulnerability, which does not correspond necessarily to the official PSN designation, at least in Burkina Faso. The 'winners' in this hierarchy are the 'real deserving refugees' (from to top to bottom as higher and lower):

1. Vulnerable camp refugees
2. Non-vulnerable camp refugees
3. Vulnerable urban refugees
4. Non-vulnerable urban refugees

I now explain why I am saying this.

During the meeting when the assistance cut was announced (16/10/2015), the WFP director stressed how donors asked them, because of the lack of funding, to "assist the refugee, not anymore according to the legal status, but according to the degree of vulnerability of the single persons. […] You should not equate refugee with assistance, is the fact of being refugee *and* vulnerable that means you'll get assistance." If this may have been true in speech, it was not in practice, in that vulnerability was assessed very simplistically among specific groups (e.g. urban or camp refugees), and, importantly, as depending on the inhabited space. Vulnerable urban refugees are 'lower' in the hierarchy than non-vulnerable camp refugees. Two instances prove this is the case in Burkina Faso: 1) assistance for PSN stopped completely in Bobo-Dioulasso, while it continued in 2016 for all refugees in camps in Burkina; 2) because of a lack of funding, assisting PSN in Bobo-Dioulasso would have been too costly and so funding was prioritised for camp refugees (PSN and not). In April 2016, I interviewed two staff members of WFP in Ouagadougou and asked

them why nothing came for PSN, as it was promised and as they are categorised as vulnerable by UNHCR and WFP as needing additional/specific support. And they told me that "even if we want to send something to the PSN in Bobo, the costs would be too great; if they're around 200, it would mean to send a truck for not even 3 tons, for 360km, it's too much. If there's a possibility to do it otherwise, we may be able to do that, but now there isn't funding anyway." The possibility to do it otherwise would have meant through cash grants; these were never implemented in the time I was in the field, nor by the consequent visits I did in 2016 and 2017.[199]

During my interview at the WFP, the two staff members also provided insights on their understanding of refugeeness, and their conceptualisation of 'deserving/real' refugees. Talking about the cut in assistance for all urban refugees, one of them said to me that it was because "we have to prioritise and focus on the most vulnerable people." To which I replied: "but if one moves from the city to the camp, she/he has the right to assistance?" It was explained to me that they do, though only if you are vulnerable (in practice, a PSN refugee). This was contradicted by UNHCR officials, who told the refugees (and later on in a private meeting told me as well) that any person going to the camp would still receive assistance, at least in 2016. Going back to the WFP staff members, one of them added that

199. This comment of the WFP workers should also be analysed – though it is beyond the point I am making in this work – in light of debates around whether camps are still pushed as the more practical and cheaper solution to host refugees by host countries and UNHCR and its partners, despite the 2009 policy on Refugee Protection and Solutions in Urban Areas (UNHCR 2009, see also Crisp 2017). This would not be explicitly justified in this way; UNHCR would say – and I am stating this as I was told exactly this in my previous research in 2013 and 2014 – that the camp is still a sought solution as it allows for refugees to be safer, and the host country demands this. Yet, this comment of the WFP staff members just adds to arguments saying that camps are still favoured as cheaper and more practical to control the refugee population. The security argument to justify the use of camps was actually used once by a senior staff member of UNHCR as the reason why the Burkinabè government wanted to keep the Malian refugees in camps, so they could control them better, in light of the terrorist situation in the Sahel area (14/04/2016). This is also relatable to what I say in Chapter 4 about how that same senior staff member did not want to support a project to eliminate camps in the country, and also how the responsibility for all decisions taken in the country are put by UNHCR on donors or the host government. Additionally, the WFP director, at the 'end of assistance meeting', said that "today the priority is given to refugees living in camps, since we need to save money from everything we can."

> "WFP shouldn't even give assistance to urban refugees, a refugee shouldn't live in the city. Refugees are in camps. […] When a refugee arrives [to Burkina, or the host country], he must be helpless/destitute [*démuni*], he must have nothing. When we speak of refugees we speak of camps" (13/04/16, WFP staff member, Ouagadougou).

This is quite a contrasting view than the one expressed by the CONAREF staff member in Bobo-Dioulasso, which always underlined to me, but also to the refugees, that being a refugee does not mean to be poor, it is a legal status firstly. In addition of having a stereotyped understanding of 'the refugee', that same WFP staff member also had an extremely basic understanding of 'vulnerability'. Indeed, to this humanitarian, if one is vulnerable, this means she is desperate and without money (vulnerability is thus only conditioned/caused/solved in economic terms, or material assistance in this circumstances): "even the PSN in Bobo were asked if they wanted to move to the camps to keep receiving the assistance, and UNHCR would have paid for it, but they said no! How can you appreciate their vulnerability if they refuse even this?" (13/04/2016). The opinion of this WFP staff member is paternalistic, essentializing, and dangerous. Dangerous in that that person should – for the job he/she does – be aware of the fact that those are prejudices and representations attached to a legal status, being a refugee is a legal status and situation, it is not a matter of what you possess or not and where you live. This means that in that person's judgment and opinion, whoever is not in a camp and is not destitute, should not be a refugee and be supported.

This adds a simplistic and problematic spatial dimension to the use of vulnerability in the humanitarian context in Burkina Faso. During the meetings I had

with CONAREF and UNHCR's staff my first days in Ouagadougou in October 2015, I thought that the rationale for cutting assistance for urban refugees could make sense, due to the lack of funding in the Burkina operation and greater earning opportunities in Bobo-Dioulasso than in the two camps in the north of the country. Of course, once in Bobo-Dioulasso I quickly realised 1) that 'earning opportunities' were not that widespread there either, 2) that these opportunities were not for everyone, and 3) that there were refugees in Bobo-Dioulasso, just as locals, in extremely precarious situations. The point I want to make though is not only this. Indeed, the cut in assistance for urban refugee could potentially make sense at first, as well as the agencies' emphasis on focusing on 'the most vulnerable refugee', which, if we refer to economically vulnerable ones, are more likely to be in camps. Yet, when one finds out that if the same person moves from the city to the camp, the funding is there to support her, and the person transforms herself from non-vulnerable (independently of her actual socio-economic situation in the city) to vulnerable, the issue of how 'vulnerability' is used in that context starts to be questionable. A body becomes vulnerable, according to this logic, depending on the space inhabited. More precisely, a body becomes deservingly vulnerable, or recognisably vulnerable by the agencies, depending on spatial politics. This, per se, is not necessarily a problematic understanding of vulnerability, in that spatiality and spatial politics can indeed play a role into accentuating vulnerabilities of various kind and situations of precarity (e.g. economic, if one lives far from a market, disabilities-related, with architectural barriers, gender-related, if it is a space with high SGBV rates). What is problematic, is how UNHCR and WFP appear to be 'supporting' people to become vulnerable. As Betty said, “they want to put people in the camps, that's what she's [UNHCR senior officer] actually saying” (16/10/2015). Also problematic, is the non-acknowledgment

that in the urban space vulnerabilities are also present, as this creates or solidifies existing difficult situations, as I showed in Chapter 5. This move also contrasts the agencies' emphasis on refugees needing to be self-sufficient and resilient, as making a refugee 'vulnerable' (again, according to their terms) does not go well with 'making a refugee self-sufficient'. Vulnerability is not only poorly conceptualised in separating urban from camp refugees, but also in how it is operationalized.

The figure of 'the refugee' as being a passive victim, helpless, and desperate therefore still characterises some humanitarians' worldview (internationals and locals alike, from my experience in Burkina Faso). I do not explore at length why the compassionist figure is problematic, both in empirical and theoretical terms, but the authors I mention in the previous sections of this chapter have done so, since the early 1980's. As shown above, refugees do still reproduce these narratives for a reason – why would you not perform a specific narrative when you know that those who can provide you with assistance want you to look and be a certain way? If you have the choice (and other ways of providing for yourself and your family), you would not need to do that, but my interlocutors did not always have the choice.

Yet for urban refugees, starting in 2016, even being officially recognised as vulnerable was 'not enough' to receive assistance. In December 2015, while discussing the end of food and cash assistance with a CONAREF staff member, he confirmed to me that UNHCR said that PNS would receive something. He clarified that the provision of aid would be allocated to specific cases according to their degree of vulnerability. When I asked him to develop on this, namely on how they would identify these 'cases' and their degree of vulnerability, he told me that UNHCR had not given additional information on that. It seemed like a re-evaluation was supposed to happen (to also re-evaluate the already identified PSN), and he was told by

UNHCR that a service in charge of it was going to be established, "with precise criteria of who will get it, why, and how, but I don't know yet who will be doing that" (14/12/2015), whether by CONAREF, CREDO or IEDA. The potentially vulnerable urban refugees were clearly not a main concern for UNHCR, as by mid-December 2015 the plan of action had not yet been established – and the last assistance provision had already been distributed. In addition, with the exception of the CONAREF official, none of the staff of IEDA or CREDO in Bobo-Dioulasso had then had their contract renewed for January 2016. Eventually, the two staff members of CREDO in Bobo-Dioulasso got renewed and as explained before, they were then in charge of every operational task refugee related in Bobo-Dioulasso. IEDA staff members did not get renewed – with just a few days notice.

Of what/which vulnerability are we talking about?

I want now to turn to the recognised and registered – by UNHCR – vulnerable refugees in Burkina Faso, and for this I look at PSN categories used in that context, as this shows how vulnerability is supposedly operationalized. In the case of Burkina Faso, the recognised categories are:[200]

WR	Woman at risk	Woman aged 18 or more, who is at risk because of her gender, like single mothers or carers, single women, widows, old women, women with disabilities, or violence survivors
SP	Single parent	Aged 18 or more, with one or more dependent individuals

200. Sources for the table: categories used in Burkina from UNHCR Data. The definitions I use in the above table are all citations from (my translation): https://emergency.unhcr.org/entry/124731, accessed 28/03/2018. In Bobo-Dioulasso PSN varied from 24% to 28% of the refugee population in the period between when I started fieldwork and the end of 2016 (UNHCR Data).

		for care and revenue, including children (biological or not) or elderly
SC / UC	Separated child / unaccompanied	Aged less than 18, separated from other family members and without an adult responsible (designed by law or custom) acting as carer
CR	Child at risk	Aged less than 18, at risk because of age, dependency situation, or immaturity
ER	Elderly at risk	Aged more than 60, with specific needs due to age. It includes single elderly or couples, they can have dependents, health problems, difficulties adapting to the new environment, without support from family and network, etc.
DS	Disabled person	With physical, mental, intellectual, or sensory disability, of various origins
SM	Serious medical condition	Implies need for particular assistance, either for specific treatment, food, or non-food items
Other	N/A	N/A (this has never represented more than 0.22% of the total PSN in Bobo-Dioulasso)

These categories can then be separated into sub-categories. In theory, these PSN categories are seen as also including risks/needs which are not only economical ones, but also concerning access to services, being and feeling safe, the social position of that specific category in the context and related risks. It seems, however, that in practice official categorisations of vulnerable refugees were mostly understood as related to economic and material hardship in Burkina Faso and 'solved' with economic/material solutions. The 'extra support' that was available for such refugees,

or at least for my interlocutors designated as PSN in Bobo-Dioulasso, to my knowledge, was only additional food and cash assistance, repeated drug prescriptions, or targeted IGA programmes for women. These measures are all more or less directed to compensate items that were perceived unattainable by a PSN due to access issues or for economic reasons and because due to their specific needs, they may not be able to work and get them by themselves.

If in theory the different risks are larger than economically driven ones, I am not aware of specific measures undertook in Bobo-Dioulasso to contrast those risks. In addition, people were categorised as having special needs in a very simplistic and decontextualized way. People's particular needs that make them PSN are decided during the registration process, which happens when refugees register for the first time, upon arrival in the host country, and then re-confirm them when their documents need to be renewed, every couple of years in Burkina Faso. Malian refugees had 3 levels of registration and since receiving their biometric documents (level 3; in these documents and the corresponding digital data their special needs are also 'stocked') in 2014 they had to re-register at least once in Bobo-Dioulasso.

To elaborate on this, here are some examples of why I take issues with the categories of PSN as used in the field by UNHCR and WFP in Burkina Faso. A person is considered a single parent when she – as it is usually a she, but I once met a he in the camp close to Ouagadougou in 2013 – has children to care for on her own, at least on paper. By this 'at least on paper', I mean that she must be registered as head of household, and only having 'dependants' on her refugee attestation. If she has children or brothers/sisters who are 16 or 17 and work,[201] and these individuals work

201. I do not want to fall into extreme relativism and I do not have the space to develop this here, but the scales followed by UNHCR to define a child – 18 years old, and also their understanding of forced

as well, she is anyway considered under the at risk category SP and given additional support. On the contrary, let's consider the scenario in which a married woman refugee in Bobo-Dioulasso is registered in the household attestation together with her husband, who is also registered as a refugee. However, the husband is rarely in Burkina and mostly moves around Mali and/or Burkina Faso for trading or searching for earning opportunities. He does not send remittances, as trading or the search for jobs are not going well. That woman, who has 4 children, the younger aged 1, then two twins of 3 and a half, and a fourth one of 5 and a half, is not considered as needing extra support from the agencies, as she is married and thus, on paper, has a husband who should provide for her. If a woman is married, it seems to mean in UNHCR's PSN action plan that she is cared for. Yet this is far than the case, particularly in the context of Burkina Faso and Mali.[202] Indeed, many may be married but live apart – even if the husband came to register as refugee. This case also often happens when a woman is registered in the attestation of a male relative, like a cousin or brother. No one goes to check that the stated head of that household will support its members. In addition, if the woman asks for special needs support, she is denied it as she is in the same attestation of her cousin, and getting her own attestation may prove complicated for logistical reasons or family reasons, just as in Diko and Fatoumata's stories in Chapter 5.

Further, when a marriage is involved, it is very hard to qualify for special assistance needs. Two of my main interlocutors, a married couple, earn between them no more than XOF25,000-30,000 per month, “in the good months,” which is extremely little for Burkina Faso. They have three young children, the daughter just

marriage (with no mention anywhere to arranged marriage), whether involving a minor or not, of child labour, of 'family', etc. are highly Western-centric, as in much development and aid relief work.

202. Being married but living apart in the context of migration is not an unknown and new phenomenon in West Africa (e.g. see Marie-Laurence Flahaux forthcoming work on Family strategies of migrants in West Africa).

started school, but aged 8, as before her parents could not pay for it; they are not sure yet when the second child will go to school, as, again, they are not sure about when they will have enough money to pay for his fees. He just turned 5. The third one was born during my last month of fieldwork. He is turning two in July 2018.

It thus seems that, if PSN definitions or conceptualisations on paper are said to follow a contextual understanding of risks and needs, in practice, at least in Bobo-Dioulasso, that was not the case. I could see that the way in which refugees were distinguished between vulnerable and non-vulnerable, thus deserving (of assistance) and non-deserving, was simplistic, inflexible, and largely based on assumptions or stereotypes not empirically grounded nor contextually appropriate, including the distinction between camp and urban refugees. "[T]hose in the city aren't vulnerable, because they have opportunities to work, trade/petty trade, etc." (08/10/2015) – was one of the first sentence a humanitarian told me when I arrived in Ouagadougou. As it should be clear by now, this opinion was shared with me many times by many different humanitarian workers, showing me again and again how there was an overall conception of vulnerability as meaning economic vulnerability due to a lack of employment opportunities. Vulnerability should always be defined in relation to a 'what', if one wants to use it as an operational concept, and there are many situations and structural inequalities and other dimensions that may make a person or a group vulnerable to something or someone. Focusing only on economic vulnerability, such as a lack of employment, and combining it with simplistic, rigid, patriarchal, and Western idea(l)s of vulnerable categories, is problematic. This also meant that refugees in situation of precarity in the urban context were and went unacknowledged, and when the food and assistance stopped for everyone in Bobo, as

no 'real vulnerable refugee' were said to be in urban settings, their situations got worst.

One cannot deny that a significant dimension that exacerbates people's 'vulnerabilities' is economic, as economic stability or independence can in itself play a big role in allowing a person, family, or group, to live with dignity. Rights though are another element, so is equality, in all possible thinkable spheres, and safety as well. As Assadeck showed with his use of the refugee ID card, origins and skin colour in the context of Burkina Faso can also make someone's vulnerable to, for instance, discrimination, abuses, or assault. Of course, all vulnerabilities could rarely be addressed by an agency like UNHCR or a government. Yet, pretending to address refugees' vulnerabilities and arguing that vulnerable refugees are in camps, as for those it is harder to be self-sufficient economically, is highly reductive. A way out this conundrum might be to use more specific terms (or add qualifiers), rather than rely entirely on 'vulnerability'.

At the risk of repeating myself, I want to stress once more that if we think about the depiction of refugees as passive victims, the way refugees talk about their 'refugee experience', and we look at UNHCR publicity material (and even some of their policy or implementation documents), we realise that the emphasis is not so much on vulnerability as being primarily economically driven. The emphasis is more on feeling shattered and lost, as you had to flee from home, on the “spending your days doing nothing,” or, as shown by Assadeck, on the link with victimhood and innocence. Yet the overall understanding field agents have (all those I encountered, except one) is economically-related and is linked with the idea of a deserving refugee

as being a dispossessed person and living in camps.[203] This is important as it becomes definitional and exclusionary. The link between economic hardship and vulnerability therefore seemed like the more important one on the ground. This may also be why most economic self-sufficiency programmes, critically discussed in Chapter 4, have been introduced in the camps, and not in the city – 'where everyone finds a job'. Yet even this economic approach to vulnerability is highly simplistic, as economic vulnerability, or precarity, is what made refuges become non-refugees by applying for facilitated return in order to capitalize on the status.

The main point I want to make here is that in Burkina Faso, a refugee needs to prove her vulnerability to be a 'deserving refugee', as there is a lack of funding and therefore a need to prioritise between individual refugees. The problem is that, as I showed, one can be vulnerable only in very specific ways. If the compassionist discourse discussed at the beginning of this chapter[204] wants a refugee to be vulnerable in the sense of helpless and dispossessed and this was mostly what my interlocutors also told me when asked about 'being a refugee', the reality on the ground according to the humanitarians was somewhat different. Indeed, there the narrative – then materialised in assistance or not – wants a refugee to be vulnerable in a very specific way, indicated by living in a camp, and preferably also being clearly dispossessed or officially recognised as PNS.

203. Another characteristic of the deserving refugee is also of being passive in terms of demands (political demands, or just generally opinions that contrast those of the workers), yet this came up more strongly during my field research in the camp setting (see Bardelli 2015) than this time around, and I thus did not analyse it here. Concerning the relation between vulnerability = no money, the local staff of CREDO and CONAREF in Bobo-Dioulasso – the three who were still there in 2016 – may have agreed on that, but they were, contrary to most of the people I met at UNHCR and WFP in Ouagadougou (both locals and internationals), aware that there are vulnerable refugees, for whatever reason, in the urban setting too.

204. Thus refugeeness mostly shaped by the institutionalized figure of the refugee (from its legal definition) and the victimizing and depoliticizing depiction of refugees by humanitarian agencies in order to guarantee their institutional survival, as discussed in Chapter 4.

Some constructions of 'the refugee' are valued more than others in specific places and times, and the economically vulnerable camp refugee is the 'best one' in Burkina Faso. When I say 'valued' I mean it in terms of social/institutional legitimacy given by the humanitarian workers, but also and mainly in terms of secured financial support, through programmes, measures and even food and cash assistance. Here the 'deserving refugee' as it is idealised and desired by the refugee regime in Burkina Faso becomes even harder to reach for Malian urban refugees. As I said in Chapter 4, the 'neoliberal refugee' to which one needs to correspond to get access to significant funding/investments/projects in the urban setting is a very specific figure, one that requires prior business experience, networks in the formal economy and ability to access a bank loan. This does mainly correspond to the stereotyped idea of 'refugees in the city are not vulnerable' shared by many humanitarians in Ouagadougou but which does not correspond to the real lives and experiences of most of my interlocutors, Malian urban refugees living in Bobo-Dioulasso.

The following hypothetical typologies of urban refugees would most likely be excluded from (the very few) programmes implemented after the end of assistance in Burkina Faso, and would/do practically most likely find themselves in situations of precarity or vulnerability but which are not recognised as such by UNHCR and WFP:[205]

1. A young person whose education ended after primary school and would like to continue her/his study (unless she/he or her/his parents have the means to pay for that – it is extremely expensive, even public school) or

205. These are just a few examples, it is by no way an exhaustive list as an exhaustive one would need to recount all the single lives of all the people in this situation (institutionally defined as not vulnerable and/or not deserving of support for self-sufficiency). To be precise, some of these cases, like Aminata, may be officially recognised as PSN, yet because they live in a town they are not provided with specific/additional assistance usually given to PSN.

would like to find a job in the current job-market reality for the youth in Burkina Faso;

2. A person recognised as one of the PSN, e.g. a single young mother that did not get one of the few IGA provided to some urban refugees;
3. Members of a poor household, but with both parents (both parents registered on paper, whether they are physically present or not is not taken into account as noted above);
4. A person who is a stay at home mum/or dad – social reproductive care is not an acceptable activity to be supported by the international agencies.
5. A person like Aminata (from Chapter 4), meaning an elderly person with frail health and a young child to care for.

The seeming tension between the demand for vulnerability and need for self-sufficiency is not actually an issue in Bobo-Dioulasso for my interlocutors. As both – vulnerability and self-sufficiency – are 'out of reach' in the way they are understood, accepted, and used by humanitarian agencies in Burkina Faso. What I am saying is not that Malian urban refugees cannot be vulnerable, nor self-sufficient. In most cases they are (and both of these things, as vulnerability is relational and changing). Rather, I am saying that the ways in which they are so, are not recognised as such, or accepted, by agencies like UNHCR.

Despite economic self-sufficiency/autonomy being praised as what is needed to be promoted in refugees, and simultaneously what is being demanded in order to be deserving refugees, 'vulnerability' is still the guiding principle in organising humanitarian assistance and 'enhanced' protection in Burkina Faso. Yet, just as for the 'neoliberal refugee' in Chapter 4, it is not a situated understanding of it. There is no reflection around it – at least in how it seems to be operationalized. For the refugees

themselves, their supposedly 'intrinsic' vulnerability is mostly due to the fact that they had to flee home and have lost homes, networks and money; this is what makes 'being a refugee' so hard, in the ways they told me when directly asked about it. Vulnerability as simplistically economically driven (in terms of access to job market) is what most humanitarians I talked to in the capital, and some in Bobo, used as justification for 1) supporting mostly – which became only – refugees living in camps, "where there are no job opportunities;" and 2) promoting mostly – again, only – programmes aimed at making refugees economically self-sufficient. The fact that refugees from lower socio-economic classes in urban setting had to capitalize on their status, because the end of food and cash assistance made them economically vulnerable, was not considered as sufficient proof of hardship. More precisely, this phenomenon was purposefully unacknowledged or condemned.

Not corresponding to the category of 'deserving refugee', whether the economically vulnerable and suffering one, or the self-sufficient one, who has resilience in addition to vulnerability, does not only equate to fewer 'advantages' in terms of food, material, and/or cash assistance. Indeed, one can easily become a 'threatening' or 'fraudulent' refugee, for example by capitalizing on her refugee status. Alternatively, by splitting the family, in terms of legal status (some applying for return, for the grants, other keeping the status) to strategize on all the possible ways. Or, again, by trading (and therefore moving, maybe without asking for the formal permit[206]) between Mali and Burkina Faso, while being at the same time a legally recognised refugee. These are not acceptable ways of maximising one's income. This

206. As said in Chapter 3, if a Malian refugee in Burkina Faso wishes to travel to Mali (or elsewhere), she should signal her intention to travel to CONAREF, which then grants permission and will store the information that said person will be out of the country for that length of time. Yet, non-refugee Malians can freely travel between the two countries; therefore, Malian refugees can do it too. By using their Malian passport or IDs no one at the border will ask them for the CONAREF stamp on their travel permit.

is fraud and abusing the humanitarian system. Even when this system lacks in localised and contextual knowledge of economic, political, and historical realities. I need here to add that the local staff in Bobo-Dioulasso were definitely savvy on these realities; yet UNHCR does not look to these 'experts in local knowledge' and does not really consider these people as knowledgeable, but prefers to invest in consultancy firms (from Cameroun in the case of refugees in Bobo-Dioulasso, but "they also hired white researchers in the past," according to my interlocutors) to come and conduct surveys to find out 'how the refugees live'.

AN EMPIRICALLY AND CONCEPTUALLY LIMITED VULNERABILITY

Specific representations of 'the refugee' form the basis on which a judgment about who is a deserving refugee is made, and these representations are constructed on a very narrow conceptualisation of 'vulnerability'. In addition to what is discussed above, it is narrowly conceived also in light of critical theories. Indeed, the first issue I can point at is with understanding vulnerability purely as victimization and passivity, thus affirming that "paternalism is the site of agency" and vulnerability is necessarily "the site of inaction" (Butler et al. 2016, 1). These are simplifications, and a critical understanding of vulnerability would mean acknowledging that vulnerability "ought to be understood as relational and social, and […] it always appears in the context of specific social and historical relations that call to be analysed concretely" (Ibid., 4). Yet specific groups and individuals are still characterised as vulnerable in decontextualized ways in Burkina Faso. This means that as a consequence they are treated in different ways and are caught in particular power relations and asymmetries that make them vulnerable, but that humanitarian interventions tend to overlook and

normalise. Uncritically accepting and using the concept 'vulnerability' automatically means reifying certain regimes of structural inequalities. In Burkina Faso 'vulnerability' is used by the refugee regime to prioritise between refugees, as there is a significant financial crisis in the concerned agencies, but it is implemented in simplistic and reductionist ways. In addition to being unquestioned and void of emic and empirical meaning, in this context, vulnerability is fixed onto bodies, spaces, and other specific characteristics: urban vs camp; married vs unmarried; child vs adult; elderly vs adult; women vs men.

When 'vulnerability' is simplistically used as an operational concept to 'help' (in development, humanitarianism, or other types of similar projects), or to understand situations of precarity and inequalities, it often 'misses out' a lot of information and provides generalised and inappropriate analysis, especially in non-Western contexts. For example, Crivello and Espinoza-Revollo's recent work aims at showing the importance and relevance of emphasizing more the temporal aspects of vulnerability (and care). They call for more “attention to the way 'time' (age/generation) intersects with other salient social differences, such as gender, class and location, to create vulnerability” (Crivello and Espinoza-Revollo 2018, 140). They show how including such aspects into their analysis of care, allows to move beyond modern Western vision of, in their case, childhood and care work. A similar argument could be made for the conceptualisation of vulnerability UNHCR has in Burkina Faso.

Vulnerability is socially and culturally constituted; it is multifactorial and depends on many regimes of structural inequality. There is not enough “[r]ecognition that we are all vulnerable in our dependence, but not in the same way, nor at the same time” (Crivello and Espinoza-Revollo 2018, 151). These authors explain how a different understanding of vulnerability allows for a different understanding of its relationship

with agency and not to simply put them in contrast. Indeed, "[p]art of the problem is the tendency to think in dichotomies, rather than in relationships and complexity" (Ibid., 152). Vulnerability and needs should be localised within intersecting structures, and we should focus on studying "the unequal distribution of need and vulnerability" (Rosen and Twamley 2018, 11). Taking vulnerability as a condition, as victimhood and passivity, is problematic in that it does not allow us to actually focus on the hows and whys of that vulnerability. "The status of victim is problematic; this reduces the complexity of any human being as well as individualises social problems, including the political production of vulnerability, by rooting them in essentialist notions of the self" (Ibid., 10).

For as long as 'vulnerability' is still used on the ground in a simplistic and decontextualized way as *the* base on which to judge refugees, to judge and decide their worthiness in the humanitarian context of Malian refugees in Burkina Faso, this will create 'hierarchies of humanity', and most will not 'fit' the figure of the ideal refugee. Additionally, this use of 'vulnerability' is coupled with the production of a 'neoliberal refugee', which as I showed in Chapter 4, is also intrinsically exclusionary.

CONCLUSION

The ways in which 'the refugee' is represented at both a general and global level (for instance in UNHCR campaigns) and at a more localised level (how humanitarians in Burkina Faso represent 'the refugee') have practical impacts on refugees' everyday lives. Refugeeness may be a construction, but it is a grounded one. I started this chapter by showing how my interlocutors provided me with a compassionist image of 'the refugee' when asked about their experiences or what

'being a refugee' means to them. This figure seems stereotyped and based on the victimising representation of 'the refugee' that is so often portrayed in humanitarian agencies' campaigns. This representation originates in the institutionalized and legal figure, yet rarely corresponds to the complex and varied hardships my informants face. Moreover, spending many months with them made me see how they do not filter or read their experiences through that idea of 'the refugee' – as Hacking's work may lead to think. Yet this does not mean that such mainstreamed representations of 'the refugee' are not important in their daily lives. Indeed, if they are not used by the refugees themselves to make sense of their daily experiences, simplistic and depoliticising images of 'the refugee' are the basis on which assistance is provided to refugees in Burkina Faso. In this chapter I therefore showed once more how 'being a refugee' is unequally distributed in that context and I did so by shedding light on the way humanitarians equate vulnerability with economic difficulties, and the fact that this equation is based on a basic understanding of 'economic difficulties'. My deconstruction of 'vulnerability' in its discriminatory role in the distribution of food, cash, and other material assistance in Burkina Faso, also supports that argument.

The 'contrast' that I highlighted between the 'compassionist discourse' received in the first meetings and my interlocutors' everyday lives and discussions creates a partial picture of how refugees themselves represent and reproduce the refugee label, while simultaneously stressing how my informants' lives are not mostly influenced by their refugeeness. To go back to the theories used at the beginning of this chapter, refugees do participate in their making, to use Hacking's terms, by reproducing certain discourses and representations deemed to be of 'genuine refugees' in mainstream Western public opinion and in the international community. Yet this is not the only way in which they do so. In addition to what I showed in Chapter 5, by

not making sense of their experiences through those representations, they show how their lives may be less made up by that category – or especially the simplified and stereotyped representations of it – than by various identification processes and regimes of structural inequalities. It is by linking the compassionist figure that they shared with me, their 'non-corresponding' daily practices and experiences and the way humanitarians represent them, that the compassionist discourse becomes meaningful in highlighting the pervasiveness of the refugee regime. But this pervasiveness is not only or mostly in the construction of the category and the making up of 'the refugee', the pervasiveness of the refugee regime is in reproducing or creating human hierarchies. By this I mean that where the refugee regime seems to have more 'impact' on refugees' lives, is in creating hierarchies between different individuals that do share a legal status, but do not necessarily correspond to what is expected from 'ideal refugees'. This happens through words and consequent actions, analysed in this chapter, and by sitting in the peculiar political economy I deconstructed in the previous two chapters. What I discussed in these pages, coupled with the changes that took place in 2016 and the tendencies of today's refugee regime, ended up making life more challenging for part of the urban refugees in Bobo-Dioulasso.

> "My main contention is that, when humanitarianism, often enacted through a moral imperative of compassion fills in for the failure of political-rights discourses and practices, the exclusionary effects can be brutal; indeed, I argue that, rather than furthering human dignity, the result is a limited version of what it means to be human" (Ticktin 2006, 34).

When two 'universal claims' – humanitarianism and global capitalism – meet, and they both can sustain, reinforce, or prouce regimes of structural inequality, this has significant impact on the lives of people they meet in their encounter.[207]

This chapter therefore focused less on explicitly applying economic anthropology to the refugee regime and more on the representations and discourses used on the ground. By doing this I showed how the simplistic implementation of one-dimensional categories does not take into account the heterogeneity of experiences and ends up creating new and reinforcing existing inequalities. I also showed how the concept of 'vulnerability', used in Burkina Faso to discriminate between the refugees who will receive assistance and those who will not, is problematic both at a grounded/empirical level, and a theoretical one; furthermore, it is a simplistic conceptualisation of vulnerability being used in a un-contextualized way.

207. By saying this I do not mean to simply equate 'universal claims' with inequalities and negative outcomes. Indeed, "[u]niversalism is implicated in *both* imperial schemes to control the world and liberatory mobilizations for justice and empowerment. Universalism inspires expansion – for both the powerful and the powerless" (Tsing 2011, 9).

7.

CONCLUSION

AIMS AND CLAIMS

I started this dissertation with three aims in mind. The first one could be defined as an empirically political one and arose from my first research trip in Burkina Faso. That aim was to understand how hierarchies and inequalities could be created or reinforced through a humanitarian operation. The second one was a theoretically empirical one, and was aimed at unveiling how the refugee status is represented, reproduced, negotiated, and contested by a variety of actors concerned with it (humanitarians, 'hosting communities', and mainly refugees). The third and last one was an intellectual goal and relates to my use of economic anthropology to study humanitarianism and the refugee regime.

This conclusion starts by summarising how I attained the answers to my stated questions and aims; following, I make explicit what are the contributions (and their challenges) of my work. Lastly, I explore the role that academia can play in reifying the figure of the 'neoliberal refugee' and global power dynamics and inequalities.

EMPIRICALLY POLITICAL AIM: ABOUT HIERARCHIES AND INEQUALITIES

I call the first aim an empirically political one, as it did not make sense to me (in 2013 and still today) that an assistance programme intended to 'alleviate suffering' could actually contribute to the deterioration of some people's situations. This aim is explicitly linked with my two research questions. My first research question sought to find out how hierarchies of refugeeness are reproduced in the context I studied. I

argued that the ways in which 'the refugee' and refugeeness are constructed by humanitarians and the refugee regime create hierarchies between the people of concern. I showed how these are constructed in the encounters between the refugee regime and the refugees.

I demonstrated how hierarchies of refugeeness come about through analysing how the refugee category is reproduced, negotiated, and represented, which are three instances where the hierarchisation of refugeeness comes to life. These analyses were primarily mirrored in the different empirical chapters, but they simultaneously are dynamics underlined throughout the whole work. The empirical chapters built the above-mentioned argument, but approaching it at different levels and from different perspectives and angles.

The other research question wanted to unveil how, when, and why the production of hierarchies of refugeeness could create or reinforce inequalities among the refugees. I showed that inequalities come about because hierarchies of who is the more deserving and ideal refugee are used as a basis on which to deliver assistance, allow/facilitate access to services, participate in programs, and so on. Additionally, those hierarchies are often times based on and simultaneously reify existing regimes of structural inequalities.

What I also highlighted with the ethnographic chapters is how 'the refugee' might seem a contradictory category and space to navigate when living in Bobo-Dioulasso. This is because one is expected to be both a vulnerable and a neoliberal resilient refugee, as these two are the idealised figures and representations more valued in today's humanitarian space in Burkina Faso. However, the ideal and deserving refugee is always a decontextualized figure and construction, not based on people's realities. This also means that most of the characteristics must be filled or embodied

in specific ways that refugees might not have the chance or possibility to negotiate with, and different ideal figures can be present simultaneously in the same space and time. If a refugee is not vulnerable or resilient as prescribed by UNHCR, she cannot prove 'deservingness' to assistance and, importantly, legitimacy as a refugee in the eyes of humanitarians. It thus appears clear how significant the impact of representations and discourses is. Being a refugee should be a legal definition, and fulfilling that, having the status, should be enough. Yet, it is not. One needs to have the legal definition *and* perform or embody the role in a specific way to be a deserving refugee and to get access to more than just the legal status. The refugees themselves participate in their making as a category, also by contesting and shifting its meaning, and this does not always correspond to what it is expected from them. Unfortunately, this does not change the fact that particularly in relation to material assistance, refugees still depend on what agencies like UNHCR expects from them, and their modes of operation and representations.

Ticktin (2017, 580) analyses the concept of innocence and explains how "the concept of innocence does not describe a clear-cut state of epistemic or other purity. Rather, it helps distinguish morally acceptable forms of knowledge, action, and experience, and these are inevitably tied to one's being in the world." And this 'being in the world' is defined by "class, gender, and racial background, among other positionalities, histories, and experiences. […] When one is a noninnocent child, one is no longer a child – one is simply expelled from the category." 'Refugee' should be a clear-cut state of a legal category and individuals should not be 'expelled' from the category on the base of 'positionalities, histories, and experiences'. If there is not expulsion from the legal category, the current refugee regime can expel individuals – based on their experiences and lives – from what is perceived by humanitarians as the

legitimate category of the deserving refugee. By creating (unofficial) criteria of who is a more deserving refugee, the refugee regime excludes those not fulfilling them. This hierarchisation between refugees is constructed in various ways: firstly, by being somewhat intrinsically reproduced by UNHCR's current programmes, and their solutions to 'the refugee problem.' Then, by undertaking practices and measures that can have discriminatory effects, such as ending food and cash assistance, which can push some people (mostly those already caught in various regimes of structural inequalities) to capitalize on their refugee status. Lastly, by relying on simplistic and decontextualized (in relation to Burkina Faso) representations of 'who is a deserving refugee', on which support/aid programmes are based. These hierarchies and the prioritisation of a specific unrealistic 'refugee' over other ways and embodiments of what being a refugee is, actually fosters inequalities.[208]

THEORETICALLY EMPIRICAL AIM: WHY REPRESENTATIONS MATTER

My theoretically empirical aim comes from the desire to unveil how the refugee status is represented, reproduced, and negotiated/contested. It originates in a theoretical interest, yet can only be fulfilled by empirically looking at how various actors deal with the refugee status and category. The two research questions explicitly feed into the first aim I just discussed, but are to be understood as part of this larger goal: to understand how refugeeness is constructed, we need to look at how 'the refugee' category is represented, reproduced, and negotiated, as I explained in the introduction of this work. This overall aim was attained by answering the two

208. It needs to be noted once again that hierarchies between needs and people are needed, and we cannot go without them as we live in non-egalitarian societies. The problem with the hierarchies I studied is that they are reproduced in such a way that only creates more inequalities instead than diminishing them.

research questions, as also shown by the title and content of each empirical chapter. These are not the only ways in which the 'refugee' status and category can be reproduced, negotiated, and represented, but they are those I found in the context of Malian forced migration in Burkina Faso.

Hierarchies and exclusion within that category exist in discourse and practice. There has always been contentious around the category 'refugee' and the highly charged representations accompanying it. As Harrell-Bond showed more than 30 years ago, these representations play a role not in the allocation of the legal status refugee in the first place – or at least not in the context of Burkina Faso, regulated by the OUA convention and *prima facie* recognition – but in how a person or group will be treated by humanitarian workers and agencies. Additionally, a specific figure of the 'ideal refugee' inevitably excludes. Currently, this figure is embodied by an economically vulnerable refugee and a neoliberal one, as shown in the empirical chapters. These figures come with specific expectations that the refugee regime has about them, which are not based on contextual and empirical configurations of vulnerability or entrepreneurial spirit.

In her recent work, Ticktin counterpoises the figure of the suffering victim, which is deemed as such because of her innocence, to the 1960s and 1970s figure of "the worker and the colonial militant" (2017, 581). The compassionist image of refugee, of which 'innocence' is an important component, has now a new layer to it: in addition of being vulnerable and in need of help, refugees must also be resilient and eventually self-sufficient. Acknowledging that refugees are actors in their own life and that they can be economically self-sufficient is a legitimate and respectful 'move' from practitioners and scholars, away from a compassionist and victimist representation of refugees. Yet, as I showed in this work, in practice this is not the case.

There thus seems to be a new ideal refugee figure, whereby one must prove her suffering and dispossession to be recognised as vulnerable and deserving of assistance, but she must also prove her resilience and resources, to access certain programmes. Just as Ticktin notices that “certain subjects are better positioned to fit into the conceptual framework of innocence” (2017, 582), so certain subjects are better suited to fit the figures of the 'neoliberal refugee' and/or the 'vulnerable refugee'.

In addition to being decontextualized, the representations surrounding this new figure, also make it depoliticised, or apolitical. What Ticktin says about 'innocence' – that it “appears outside history, and as such, it allows those who work as saviors to ignore the political and historical circumstances that created these victims” (2017, 583) – can also be said for 'vulnerability' in the ways it is used in Burkina Faso. How I showed in Chapter 5, 'being a refugee' is much more than a simplistic understanding of vulnerability (or self-sufficiency), and it is entangled with existing social structures.

'Hierarchies of humanity' are not only dictated by moral governments and 'moral grammars', as Ticktin calls them, but also by a neoliberal or commodified grammar. Here, I am thus not saying that the refugee regime is exclusively creating neoliberal subjects as they are conceptualised, for example, by Chandler and Reid (2016). I am saying that the refugee regime promotes neoliberal ideals and also follows a rationale based on capitalist logics, which are intrinsically unjust and unequal, and do not allow for change or consideration of change in relation to the politically charged movement that my interlocutors undertook. This 'grammar' also demands for conformity with Western definitions and conceptualisations. The contextual manner of being, for

instance, entrepreneurial in the Burkinabè or West African context[209] is not accepted or respected. In addition, the way vulnerability is conceived in that humanitarian space is also a reflection of this broader issue with, arguably, neo-colonial and neoliberal logics and worldviews that can also be found behind humanitarian and development programmes.[210]

INTELLECTUAL AIM: COMMODIFICATION PROCESSES AND ECONOMIC ANTHROPOLOGY

The last aim I had when starting this dissertation was an intellectual one, and relates to my use of economic anthropology to study humanitarianism and the refugee regime, which is the approach I followed to answer my research questions. This choice was motivated by empirical observations, and is particularly linked with another overarching argument I made. The latter was not an answer to my questions, but arose while looking for their answers: refugeeness is commodified in today's refugee regime and in how it plays out in Burkina Faso. The hierarchies that are so central in my thesis, and the consequent reinforcement or creation of inequalities, are entangled with the commodification processes I argue are at work in the refugee regime. By suggesting that refugeeness is commodified, one of the central issues I

209. See, for example, Wale's (2017) edited book *The political economy of everyday life in Africa*.
210. An interesting reflection related to this, comes from Bracke's work (2016, 60) analysing vulnerability, resilience and resistance, and subject creation. She underlines different figures of 'resilient subjects', and one of those is "the subject of the global South who has survived colonization, exploitation, and wars and has been subjected to austerity programs, most often conceptualized in the global North, and other forms of exploitation. We might call this a subject of *subaltern resilience*, or the resilience of the wretched of the earth, which is born out of the practice of getting up in the morning and making it through the day in conditions of often unbearable symbolic and material violence. […] The resilience of the wretched of the earth is arguably fetishized by the economic and political institutions that bear great responsibility for the contemporary conditions of precarity that are (designed to be) met with resilience, if that is what we want to call it. And Neocleous argues in his critique of the centrality of resilience in poverty alleviation programs: 'The beauty of the idea that resilience is what the world's poor need is that it turns out to be something that the world's poor already possess; all they require is a little training in how to realize it. Hence the motif of building, nurturing, and developing that runs through so much of the IMF literature'" (Neocleous 2013, in Brack 2016).

wish to highlight is that a specific 'legitimate refugee' ends up being more 'valued' than other ways of embodying and living the category, and this participates in creating or reifying hierarchies between the refugees.

In addition to relying on the concepts of commodification and commodification processes to define what I was observing in the field, these were also an analytical 'tool box' helping me to unpack what I was seeing. Indeed, contending that refugeeness is commodified also means showing how refugeeness appears as having taken on a natural and objective quality: how refugeeness is produced and negotiated is concealed. This is crucial, as it is by 'ignoring' all these aspects that the hierarchies of refugeeness can take place, and by 'ignoring' pre-existing and mutually constituting regimes of structural inequalities that the Malians live in. The ways in which 'the refugee' is represented, reproduced, and negotiated on the ground, in interactions, is a critical component of refugeeness. By deconstructing these elements in the different empirical chapters, I thus demonstrated how refugeeness can be commodified (or analysed as going through such processes) and how hierarchies of refugees came to life in the encounter of the refugee regime and the refugees' lives and contexts.

The economic anthropology literature I use importantly also underlines how commodification processes are never totalising. Indeed, these processes do not determine everything; parts of the construction of 'the refugee' and the workings of the refugee regime take place in non-commodified ways. Nevertheless, the 'successes' in commodifying are enough to reinforce and create inequalities. If my use of economic anthropology and its concepts is a framework, a theoretical way of making sense and analysing what I saw, reality is always more nuanced and complex than a set of theories and concepts.

CONTRIBUTIONS (AND THEIR CHALLENGES)

As I said in the introduction, the main contribution of my work lies in its analysis of how the encounter between the refugee regime and the refugees' lives can (re-) produce inequalities. My examination allowed me to bring that (re-)production to light because it observed refugees' daily lives and 'strategies' at a micro-level and it considered how the refugee regime intersects with pre-existing and mutually constituting regimes of structural inequalities and identity markers in my interlocutors' lives. To analyse this encounter I looked at how 'the refugee' category is reproduced, negotiated, and represented.

Having studied this, it allows me to show and argue that the category 'refugee' and the possibility to negotiate with it, are unequally produced and distributed, locally but also globally and these inequalities can be reinforced by the refugee regime. This finding is not surprising but has not often been made explicit: 'being a refugee' is experienced differently and varies according to regimes of structural inequalities in which one's life is, as well as according to personal experiences and resources. 'Being a refugee' also differs across space: camp versus urban space, but also depending on the country of origin and the form of hosting.

I also argued that my interlocutors' lives might not be primarily influenced by the fact that they are refugees. This claim does not equate to saying that nothing 'sets them apart', nor I am trying to define what 'sets them apart'. Just as Cole argues (2016, 225), I am not interested in deciphering "whether there is something unique about refugees beyond their legal status that makes them a clear object of study." Rather, I focus "on the ways in which labelling individuals as refugees makes them

different, and exploring what follows from this for the persons, governments and institutions affected" (Ibid.).

The relevance of my work is also to empirically increase our knowledge of self-settled (in an urban area in this case) refugees' experiences, especially in the sub-Saharan context. This could enhance practical understandings of integration processes, relations with host-communities, and humanitarian operations. An ethnographic and intersectional study of refugees' experiences suggests that if we want more effective aid programs, for forced migrants but also host communities, then more meticulous studies need to be undertaken first, to be sure that they will deliver what they set out to do, instead of just creating additional problems, as in the case of Burkina Faso.

At the same time, by questioning themes such as refugee economies, self-reliance programmes, and others discussed in this work, I might be working against other practitioners, humanitarians, and scholars wanting to make refugees more accepted by host communities. Yet, as I will discuss shortly, I find this argument problematic when we take into account the larger hegemonies it can reify. In addition, I have reservations that an argument similar to 'refugees are good for the economy / refugees just want to work' would resonate better than one based on ideas of solidarity and justice. The same argument with one different word (*migrants* are good for the economy / *migrants* just want to work) has not proved to be persuasive in the last few decades. Similarly, the compassionist argument and discourse has also not proved convincing in terms of changing the politics of migration and hospitality. As Gramsci says (2011, 14), that "is the useless hospitality, the one that comes with the tiny tear, with the pitiful exclamation, without any continuity of character, of civil solidarity."

My work is cautioning about the exclusionary effects that programmes such as those supporting refugees' economic self-reliance might have, and about a Western neoliberal rationale of the refugee regime. This approach and programmes may seem to only work towards providing refugees with employment, but we forget that their impact can be broader, as I showed in this dissertation. Simultaneously, by saying this, I do not want to imply that global capitalism, neoliberal ideals, or commodification processes are entirely deterministic and are uncontested. Rather, I tried to look beyond these issues and question them. Yet, a part of forced migration and refugee studies seems to be taking these issues for granted and to be reifying them.

A CRITIQUE OF THE ROLE RESEARCH CAN PLAY

Categories like 'refugee', which are firstly legal and policy categories, can be reified by academic works and in so doing their often homogenising and generalizing effects can be reproduced and spread (Fresia 2009, 23). Scholars in the field of refugee and forced migration studies have been deconstructing the category and the representations attached to it since the 1980's; however, in some strands of refugee research, the problematic representational and practical aspects of the categories under scrutiny can still be reified in different ways and for different goals. The latter may correspond to directing our research towards 'policy relevance' (see Bakewell 2008; Malkki 1995b); to interests/demands of funding agencies; to the existence of partnerships between universities and private actors/companies; to focusing on what is implemented and 'there' already, and how to improve that.

Of course, the first and last point in particular can be linked with the desire of academics to improve the often extremely difficult situations in which our interlocutors find themselves. Researchers often pay more attention to short term amelioration, suggesting to improve what is available (for example how to improve material assistance to refugees and how to design better empowerment programmes), than to the effects our suggestions may have in the long term and how/if they end up reifying the problematic and homogenising representations of the groups we look at.[211]

Despite the awareness of the risk of academia reifying issues that ought to be questioned or unpacked, some scholars in social sciences have lately invested a lot of time, resources, and commitment into looking at refugees' economies, financial self-sufficiency programs, the profitability/growth/positive economic inputs refugees can bring to host societies, and other similar topics. As I said earlier, recognising refugees' agency, whether economic or other forms, is important, especially since refugees had their agency 'taken away' for long and have generally been depicted as passive victims. Yet one thing is recognising their agency, and another is making them responsible for their successes or failures in finding (economic) solutions for themselves. Refugees' agency needs to be highlighted, but within a framework that politicises their displacement, that stresses why it is important to recognise and support their agency, why their agency was/is constrained – whether directly by the displacement and the reasons behind it, or by larger regimes of structural inequalities and oppressive historical dynamics. The figure of 'the neoliberal refugee' might also be motivated by a good will of showing that refugees are indeed resourceful actors,

211. Similarly, the focus on these categories and policy/humanitarian programmes may not allow us to build a strong theoretical framework, which is essential to bring about empirical change (Bakewell 2008; Chatty and Marfleet 2013).

but, in addition to the critiques I address in the previous chapters, it is just as depoliticising and homogenising as the figure of the voiceless and passive refugee that we have been deconstructing since the 1980s.

It might be argued that I am too reifying these processes, as I am using economic anthropology to analyse humanitarian issues. Yet I argue this approach is what allows me to make sense of induced inequalities, as well as to highlight how the refugees' lives are larger than just their refugeehood. I wanted to look at the broader issues that the commodification of refugeeness brings about, particularly its role in creating hierarchies and inequalities. And I situated these phenomenon and dynamics within the contexts where refugees' lives sat, to have a wider view than just the refugees and the humanitarian space.

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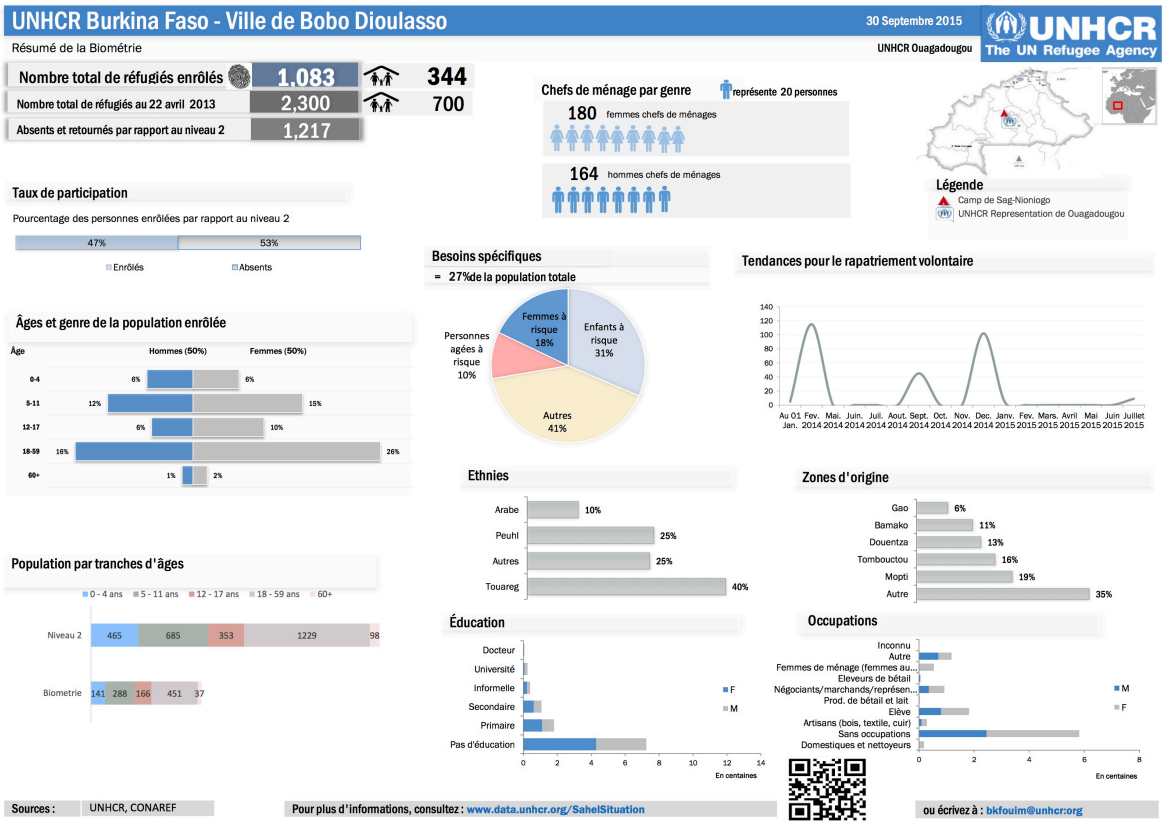
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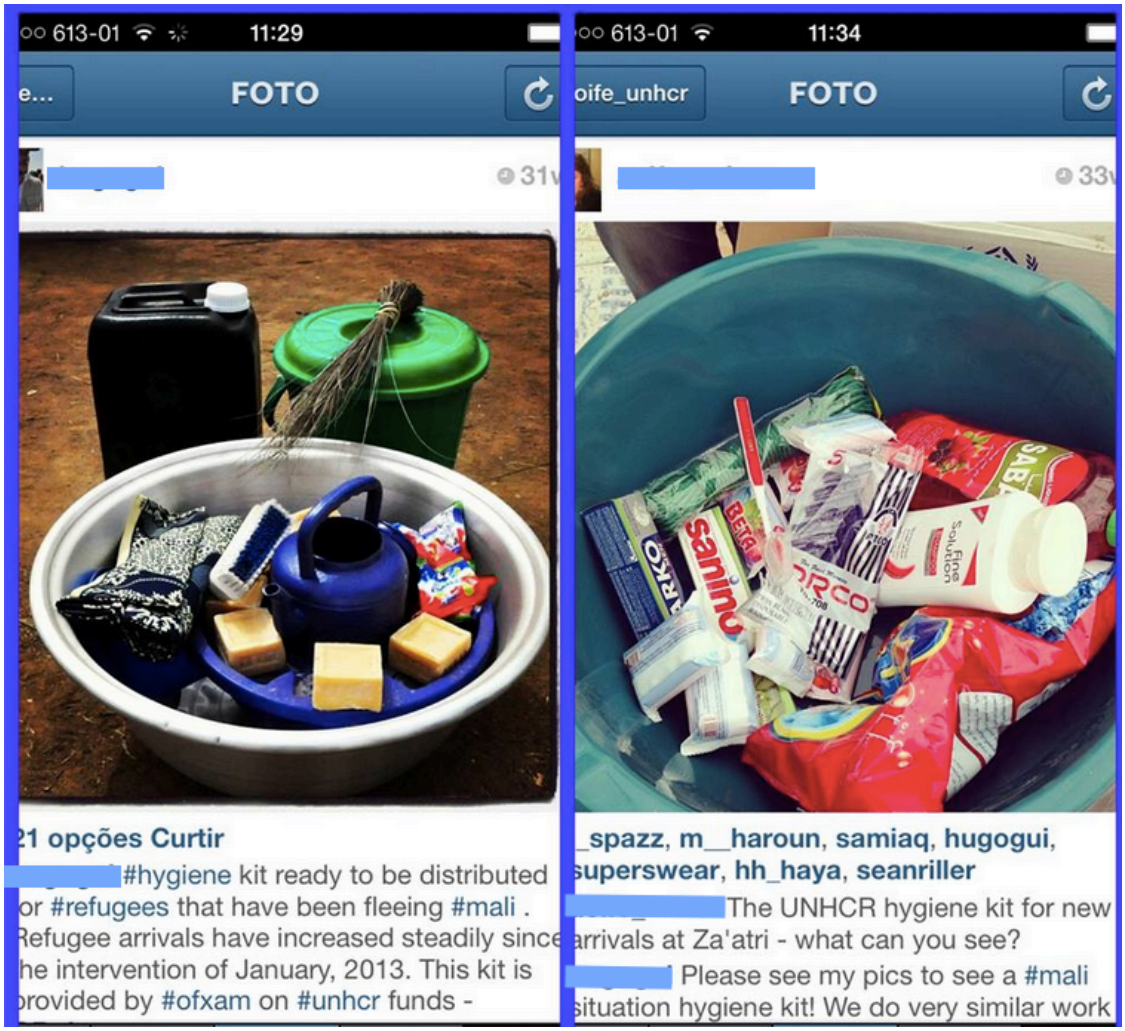
APPENDIX 1 – UNHCR DASHBOARD BOBO-DIOULASSO 2015

Source: data.unhcr.org/SahelSituation (uploaded September 30, 2015)



APPENDIX 2 – HYGIENE KITS IN COMPARISON (2014)

Burkina Faso, Sag-Nioniongo camp (left) vs. Jordan, Za'atri camp (right)



© Former UNHCR staff member's Facebook page (confidential), 2014

APPENDIX 3 - UNHCR AND WFP DIVISION OF TASKS

Source: "Memorandum of understanding" (UNHCR & WFP 2011); I only selected the more relevant points.

3.22: In refugee camp settings, UNHCR with its implementing/operational partners are responsible for assessing, implementing, monitoring and evaluating nutrition programmes and the status of beneficiaries. […] UNHCR will organize regular nutrition surveys and maintain an effective surveillance system for monitoring the nutrition status of beneficiaries.

3.23: For refugees outside of camps, responsibility for assessing, implementing, monitoring and evaluating selective feeding programmes will be decided at the country level on a case-by-case basis.

5.1: WFP is responsible for mobilizing cereals, edible oils and fats, pulses or other sources of proteins, salt, sugar, high-energy biscuits, and fortified blended foods for general, selective and school feeding programmes.

5.2: WFP will ensure the provision of improved fortified blended foods […]. When WFP is unable to provide these items, UNHCR, in consultation with WFP, will explore other possibilities for their provision until WFP is able to provide them.

5.3: UNHCR is responsible for providing therapeutic milk and ready-to-use therapeutic foods for the treatment of severe acute malnutrition in selective feeding programmes.

5.6: For its assistance activities, UNHCR is responsible for ensuring adequate supplies of non-food items and services, particularly those relevant to the safe and effective use of food items, such as cooking utensils, fuel, water and sanitation, medicines, soap, shelter, and appropriate health services.

6.5: The decision to provide food assistance in the form of cash or vouchers will be based on JAMs (Joint assessment missions) or other expert recommendations. […] Distribution of food and non-food items can be carried out by a third implementing partner; UNHCR bears most of the responsibility in that implementation.

6.7: […] the UNHCR or WFP country office may request modifications to the pattern of distribution, or stop distribution altogether, after appropriate consultation and exchange of documentation has occurred.

7.1: UNHCR and WFP will each mobilize the funds and other resources necessary for the discharge of their respective responsibilities.

7.2: UNHCR and WFP will ensure that the resource implications for each agency are set out in all approaches to donors and related documentation in a manner that makes clear these responsibilities and their complementarity. […] Approaches to donors will be coordinated, and UNHCR will share with WFP, in advance, the text covering food needs in any appeal to donors. Joint approaches will be made whenever appropriate, at the start of a new operation and whenever it appears that donors' response will not ensure the timely delivery of the necessary relief items.

7.4: UNHCR will support WFP's advocacy efforts with donors that specifically seek the provision of cash for local, regional or international purchase of food to ensure that beneficiaries' needs are met in the most timely and cost-effective manner possible. UNHCR will also support WFP's general approaches to donors for cash contributions to maintain the Immediate Response Account (IRA) at the approved level, and for contributions to any similar fund allowing WFP to respond swiftly to new emergency food needs.

7.5: WFP and UNHCR will collaborate on public information activities to promote awareness of the food security and related non-food needs of beneficiaries, understanding of each agency's role, and support for each agency's work to address these needs. When communicating with the media and the general public, each agency will regularly acknowledge the other's role in joint operations, to ensure the common goal of donor and host Government support.

APPENDIX 4 – SEEDS FOR SOLUTIONS 2014-2017

Transcription from the video of the first year of project implementation, available at www.youtube.com/watch?v=yDRRGRjKI7g&feature=youtu.be, published on 16/04/2017.

Introductory text: As a humanitarian and non-political UN agency, UNHCR is the global organization legally mandated to lead the international action to protect, assist and find durable solutions for refugees and stateless persons. In Burkina Faso, UNHCR provides refuge, gives life-saving assistance and protects fundamental rights of Malian refugees who forcibly left their home country because of the socio-political crisis prevailing since 2012. Most of them have chosen to settle in official camps and spontaneous sites in the Sahel belt of the country. Burkina Faso currently hosts around 34'000 Malian refugees. The agency has constantly been developing new ways to help them build a better future by promoting self-reliance and empowerment, encouraging education and improving skills.

UNHCR representative Burkina Faso: Initially, UNHCR was created to assist refugees in a well-defined and very short period of time. Though we noticed that asylum in neighbouring countries lasts a long time. When I take Burkina Faso as an example, we also thought that after two years the Malian refugees would return home. But it is now obvious that asylum persists. Then we must change our strategy in response to this situation. That is why we proposed projects aimed at empowering [the term used in French in the video for empowering is 'autonomisation'] the refugees.

UNHCR food security and nutrition officer: Seeds for solution is what we call a value chain project; it supports the development of value chains in Burkina by integrating refugees into these existing chains. So these projects are focused on the milk value chain and the artisan value chain. The project is a multi-years project that looks to support the development of refugee livelihoods in these two sectors going from building their assets, to improving their business skills, to integrating them into decentralised services and you know, access to decentralised services is important.

A refugee and herder: This population is predominantly nomadic, they rely on livestock. Seeds for solutions project is about livestock and livestock products. Seeds

for solutions is opening our eyes, showing alternative procedures that might be more profitable.

UNHCR food security and nutrition officer: The milk project looks at increasing production, training them on how to improve animal health, protect their livestock, support them to produce milk in more hygienic ways, gives material and equipment to process milk. So, by giving them equipment and materials we're actually building their physical assets and it also looks to help them build dairies, improves dairies, which are normally managed by the local populations but we want to also integrate refugees. The children actually will be running ahead of their mothers to come to this milk kitchen, so it's something very much in their traditional diet, you see a lot of smiley faces, with milk moustaches, the women are all very happy about it.

And the artisan project is also a *very market oriented* [original emphasis] project, it's high impact, because they already produce very lovely objects so we actually want to tweak, what we call tweak the products, to improve the design, improve the marketability, and then get it out in to the international market. So, this is what we're doing and they follow the same line, benefices of the milk project, meaning, we develop their skills, we develop their assets with materials, equipment, infrastructure and then we train them how to run a business, how to function in groups, we help them enter into markets in a sustainable way.

A refugee and crafter [with the caption 'selling his product in Ouagadougou's cultural event', which means the market organised at the French Institute, thus a very specific space, mostly occupied by expatriates and Burkinabè elites]: It is good to work with UNHCR because they give us good ideas on what we do. They try to find partners interested in our products.

UNHCR representative Burkina Faso: I think that if we keep on going with the same momentum, after three years this project will bear fruit, and will serve as a pilot project for other countries.

APPENDIX 5 – 2017 UPDATE ON SEEDS FOR SOLUTIONS PROGRAMME

The following information was shared through email correspondence (24/11/2017) by a UNHCR staff member in Ouagadougou:

"Ce projet qui est très bien accueilli et profite bien aux réfugiés et aux populations hôtes prendra fin en **décembre 2017**, pendant que les bénéficiaires ne sont pas encore suffisamment autonomes. Donc nous sommes en quête de financement pour pouvoir amener les bénéficiaires à un niveau d'autonomisation acceptable avant le retrait du HCR. Ce qui a pu être atteint dans le cadre du projet :

Volet lait :

- 151 micro-entreprises travaillent dans le secteur de l'élevage pour fournir le lait aux mini-laiteries ;
- 12 mini-laiteries ont été mises en place par le HCR pour la transformation du lait ;
- Le lait frais pasteurisé acheté dans ces laiteries est servi à 5 cantines de lait (3 au camp de Goudoubo et 2 au camp de Mentao) où il est distribué à 2178 enfants réfugiés de 0 à 59 mois.

Volet artisanat :

- 2000 artisans réfugiés bénéficient d'un appui (formation en design, matières premières subventionnées, espace de vente de produits artisanaux au SIAO, Village Artisanal, etc.) et deviennent progressivement auto-suffisants ;
- Contrat signé avec la structure Africa Tiss permet d'assurer le marketing qui ouvre les produits des artisans au marché international ; des ventes à l'international sont réalisées ;
- 2015 à 2017, les ventes cumulées atteignent **environ 30. 000 euros** ;
- Un partenariat avec une structure de design ghanéenne AAKS a permis la formation de 15 femmes artisanes (3 femmes de la population hôte et 12 femmes réfugiées) dans la réalisation de prototypes d'abat-jour pour les lampes.

Tout ceci contribue progressivement à l'autonomisation de ces personnes et par ricochet leurs familles.

Les défis du projet « Seeds for Solutions » sont :

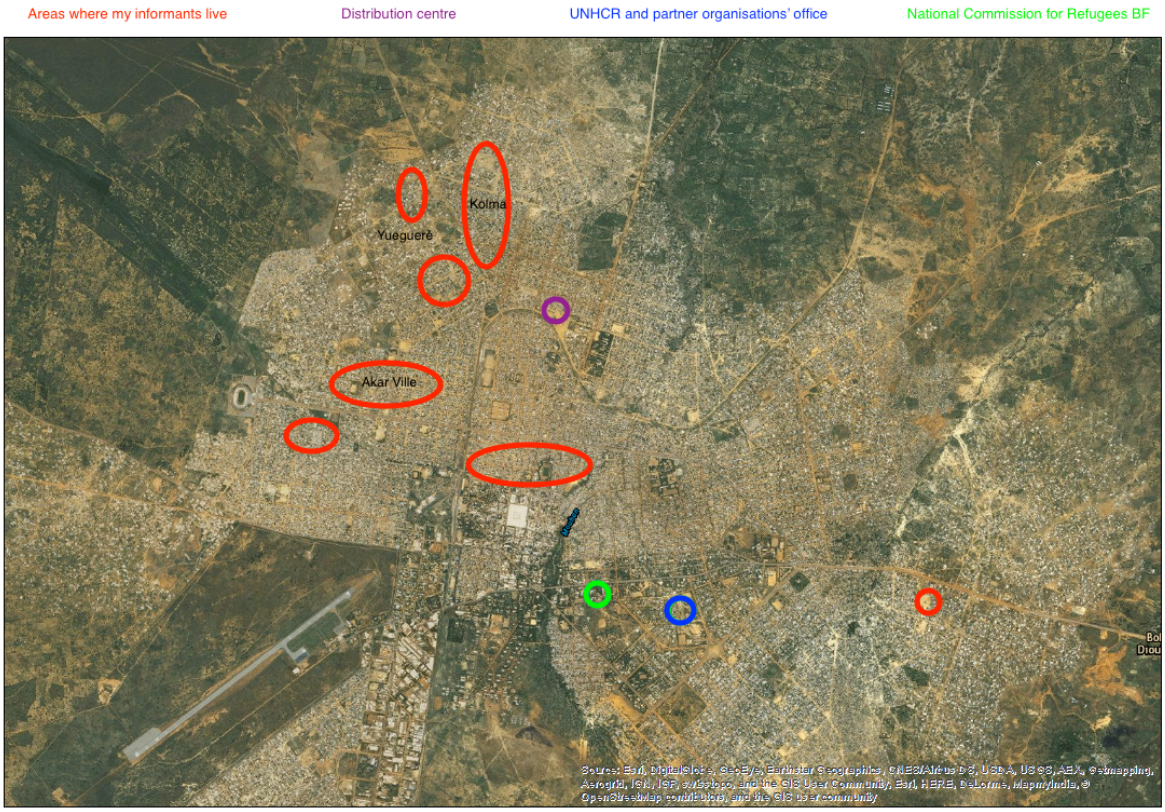
- Fin de projet en décembre 2017, pendant que les bénéficiaires ne sont pas encore totalement autonomes ;
- Les mini-laiteries n'ont pas encore atteint un niveau d'autosuffisance qui leur permettra de subsister après le retrait du HCR à la fin du projet ;
- Le HCR est le seul gros acheteur du lait produit par les mini-laiteries pour l'approvisionnement des cantines de lait dans les camps. Le retrait du HCR signifie en même temps l'arrêt des achats de lait et l'arrêt des cantines de lait ;
- Le Bureau est en quête de financement pour poursuivre et parvenir à l'autonomisation de ces réfugiés, mais aussi assurer la survie des laiteries et la continuation des cantines de lait qui bénéficient aux enfants ;
- Discussions en cours avec le PAM pour explorer la possibilité de poursuivre les activités des cantines de lait, et d'acheter les produits des laiteries pour ses propres cantines scolaires.

APPENDIX 6 – UNHCR'S USE OF CASH GRANTS FOR RETURN

Sources: Jeff Crisp (personal email correspondence, 07/04/17) and Haver et al. (2009).

When	From where (host country/region)	To where (country of origin)	How many people	Additional information
1985-1992	Central America	El Salvador and Nicaragua	N/A	Facilitated, but large scale
1990-1993	Pakistan	Afghanistan	900,000	Organized
1992-1993	Thailand	Cambodia	370,000	Organized
1992-1997	Mexico and Honduras	Guatemala	43'000	Organized
2000	Iran	Afghanistan	50'000	Organized
2002 - ongoing	Pakistan and Iran	Afghanistan	~ 3mio	Organized / facilitated
2001	Ehtiopia	Djibouti	500	Small scale (most likely facilitated)
2001	Sudan	Eritrea	N/A	Small scale
2002-2007	Djibouti	Somalia (Somaliland)	N/A	Small scale
2002	Bangladesh	Myanmar	N/A	Small scale
2003	Saudi Arabia	Iraq	N/A	Small scale
2004 – ongoing	Sierra Leon	Liberia	3'500	Facilitated
2005	DRC	CAR	790	Facilitated
2007 – ongoing (?)	Tanzania	Burundi	150'000	Organized
2007 – ongoing (?)	Benin	Togo	N/A	Small scale
2007 – ongoing (?)	Yemen	Somalia	N/A	Small scale
Nov. 2014 - ongoing	Burkina Faso	Mali	4,379 (as of 29/11/2016)	Facilitated

APPENDIX 7 – BOBO-DIOULASSO AND LOCATIONS OF INTEREST



Distance indicator: from the blue point (UNHCR's offices) the middle of Kolma's neighbourhood it is about 7.5km, and represents a 20-25 minutes motorcycle drive without traffic congestion and tire punctures.

APPENDIX 8 – REPATRIATION TENDENCIES BF

Source: UNHCR Burkina Faso (email correspondence, 29/11/2016)

Rapatriement 2014

Dynamique 2014 (Rapatriement des Réfugiés maliens au Burkina Faso)

Zones d'installation des Réfugiés / Mode de rapatriement	Total rapatriés jusqu'au 31 Decembre 2014													Choix Mode Retour	
	Janvier	Fevrier	Mars	Avril	Mai	Juin	Juillet	Aout	Sept	Oct	Nov	Dec	Total par zone		
Goudoubo / Rapatriement facilité											78	89	167	31%	536
Goudoubo / Rapatriement spontané		139	143		13					63	11		369	69%	
Mentao / Rapatriement facilité											231	330	561	28%	2,039
Mentao / Rapatriement spontané	6	487	123	278	78		24	9	48	301		124	1,478	72%	
Ouahigouya / Rapatriement spontané							54						54	100%	54
Hors camp Oudalan/ Rapatriement spontané	2	41			160						3		206	100%	206
Ouaga / Rapatriement facilité											2		2	33%	6
Ouaga/ Rapatriement spontané						4							4	67%	
Sag-nioniogo / Rapatriement facilité											109	23	132	79%	167
Sag-nioniogo/ Rapatriement spontané					2	19					14		35	21%	
Bobo / Rapatriement facilité											42	1	43	33%	129
Bobo/ Rapatriement spontané									44		11	31	86	67%	
Total	8	667	266	278	253	23	78	9	92	364	501	598		30%	Facilité
Total Général													3,137	60%	Spontané

Rapatriement Facilité	905
Rapatriement Spontané	2,232

Objectif 31 Decembre 2014 (Facilité)	3,000
Reste pour les atteindre l'objectif	2,095

Rapatriement 2015

Dynamique 2015 (Rapatriement des Réfugiés maliens au Burkina Faso)

Zones d'installation des Réfugiés / Mode de rapatriement	Total rapatriés jusqu'au 31 Decembre 2015													Choix Mode Retour	
	Janvier	Fevrier	Mars	Avril	Mai	Juin	Juillet	Aout	Sept	Oct	Nov	Dec	Total par zone		
Goudoubo / Rapatriement facilité	33											276	309	86%	360
Goudoubo / Rapatriement spontané	1			6		5				8	8	23	51	14%	
Mentao / Rapatriement facilité	54											330	384	62%	619
Mentao / Rapatriement spontané	81	21	29	40	8	12	2	15	3	6	13	5	235	38%	
Hors camp Oudalan/ Rapatriement spontané											25		25	100%	25
Sag-nioniogo / Rapatriement facilité	5												5	13%	38
Sag-nioniogo/ Rapatriement spontané	4	17					12						33	87%	
Bobo / Rapatriement facilité	4											44	48	81%	59
Bobo/ Rapatriement spontané							9	1				1	11	19%	
Total	182	38	29	46	8	17	23	16	3	14	46	679		68%	Facilité
Total Général													1,101	32%	Spontané

Rapatriement Facilité	746
Rapatriement Spontané	355

Objectif 31 Decembre 2015 (Facilité)	2,500
Reste pour les atteindre l'objectif	1,754

Rapatriement 2016

Dynamique 2016 (Rapatriement des Réfugiés maliens au Buurkina Faso)

Zones d'installation des Réfugiés / Mode de rapatriement	Total rapatriés jusqu'au 31 Janvier 2016													Choix Mode Retour	
	Janvier	Fevrier	Mars	Avril	Mai	Juin	Juillet	Aout	Sept	Oct	Nov	Dec	Total par zone		
Goudoubo / Rapatriement facilité				445		520					137		1,102	88%	1,249
Goudoubo / Rapatriement spontané	2		38	1	4	54	2	6	39	1			147	12%	
Goudoubo / (RF) Revenu au pays d'asile															
Mentao / Rapatriement facilité		495			877						63		1,435	100%	1,441
Mentao / Rapatriement spontané							2				4		6	100%	
Mentao / (RF) Revenu au pays d'asile							7				5		12		
Bobo / Rapatriement facilité			5	87			28				71		191	94%	
Bobo/ Rapatriement spontané	1		2	5							4		12	6%	203
Total	3	495	45	538	881	574	25	6	39	1	274	0		95%	Facilité
Total Général													2,881	6%	Spontané

Rapatriement Facilité	2,716
Rapatriement Spontané	165

Objectif 31 Decembre 2016 (Facilité)	5,000
Reste pour les atteindre l'objectif	2,284

Cumul avec 2014 - 2015 et 2016	8,842

Facilité	4,367
Spontané	4,475