

A Refugee Camp as Economic Place

The importance of a social network in a protracted
situation



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Front Cover:

“Somali women wait for food at a distribution center at Ifo camp in Dadaab”.

CARE. <http://www.care.org/gallery/439>

PREFACE

This thesis is about refugees who try to make a living in a protracted situation whilst they are situated in refugee camps.

The reason for writing this thesis is that I have always had an interest in the lives of refugees. When I had to take some extra courses for my minor, I made the decision to study the minor “war and conflict” in Groningen. I was hoping to learn more about the lives and coping strategies of refugees and how conflicts have changed their lives. I was a bit disappointed when I found out that this minor was only focusing on the causes of war and conflict and not on the consequences. With my background as international development student with a specialization in sociology in development, I wanted to combine sociological research with my interests for refugees.

Another reason that made me want to write this thesis was the start of the “Arabic spring”. At the beginning of 2011 there was a wave of protest against the reigning authorities in multiple Arabic countries, that started in December 2010 in Tunisia. Here in the Netherlands there was a fear for a so-called “mass influx”. The Dutch society was more anxious about what this Arabic spring would mean for them and what the implications were for the Dutch society as a whole, than it was concerned about the people who were really affected. Now a couple of years later we know that there was not a mass influx of refugees to the Netherlands. Most of the people who fled stayed in their own country or in the Arabic region. There was only one big exception, the Syrian Arab Republic. In 2012 647,000 people fled their country and most of them found refuge in the states in the Arabic region (UNHCR, 2013b: 11).

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CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

The aim of this thesis is to give more insight in the life of camp-based refugees in protracted situations and to explore how these refugees use and create their networks in order to maintain their livelihoods. With this thesis I want to give a more nuanced image of refugees. Refugee discourse is often focused on the negative side of refugee life. With this thesis I want to show that refugees are humans that try to make the best out of their situation. To do so this thesis focuses on the role that refugees' social networks play in their livelihood strategies and the camp economy compared with the framework of the humanitarian assistance regime. What important is to acknowledge is that camps are often seen as security problems, political problems, humanitarian problems, and as factors in war economies (Jacobsen, 2005: 23). In this thesis there is not a lot of emphasis on the downside of refugee camps. Because for a lot of people refugee camps are an opportunity, it becomes an economic place, where they can look for jobs, produce, education, health care assistance, etcetera.

Before analyzing the lives of refugees it is important to have a basic knowledge on the current refugee situation. In this first chapter I will start by giving a short overview on the current status of refugees and some background information on protracted refugee situations. I will look at the causes of protracted crises and the implications it has for refugees from a humanitarian point of view.

BRIEF INTRODUCTION ON THE STATUS OF REFUGEES

In 1993 the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) started to record the number of forcibly displaced people. Since then the smallest number of forcibly displaced people was 37.5 million people, this occurred in 2005 (UNHCR, 2013a). In 2010 there were, according to the UHNCR, 43.7 million people forcibly displaced individuals. Approximately 15.4 million of them were refugees, 27.5 million people were internally displaced persons (IDPs) and the rest were asylum-seekers (UNHCR, 2011:5). In 2011 the overall number of forcibly displaced people decreased with 1.2 million compared with the year before. The total number was 42.5 million people whereof 15.2 million refugees, 26.4 million IDPs and 895,00 asylum-seekers (UNHCR, 2012: 3). These forcibly displaced people are mostly residing in poor locations, approximately eighty percent of all the refugees live in a developing country, and 7.1 million of the total number of refugees are in a protracted crises situation (ibid). There has always been some fluctuation in the number of forcibly displaced people but in the past year the number increased. There were 45.2 million forcibly displaced people in 2012, the highest number since 1994 (UNHCR, 2013b: 3)

The UNHCR makes a distinction between refugees and other forcibly displaced people. This is due to the fact that refugees have different legal rights than, for example, asylum-seekers. Jacobsen (2005:4)

defines refugees as follows: “refugees are people displaced by persecution, war, or conflict, who have fled across an international border and are in need of international humanitarian assistance” and is recognized as such by the host country, who has ratified international agreements on refugee law. In international human rights law a refugee is defined as follows: “a refugee, according to the Convention, is someone who is unable or unwilling to return to their country of origin owing to a well-founded fear of being persecuted for reasons of race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social group, or political opinion” (UNHCR, 2010:3). To be recognized as a refugee, one has to fit the definition of a refugee. In some cases it is impossible for authorities to determinate each individual as a refugee (UNHCR, 1992). This occurs when there is a mass influx of people, who are fleeing their home country. In some cases, when there is a rapid escalation of a conflict situation, there really is a mass influx of refugees. But in most cases there isn’t really a mass influx, most refugees flee in small groups or as individuals (Jacobsen, 2005). Sometimes when there really is a mass influx the need for assistance can become so big that a large group of people will be determined as refugee without individual investigation to find out if the refugee is indeed having a fear of being persecuted. These groups of people are given the status of refugee based on *prima facie*, meaning: in the absence of evidence to the contrary (UNHCR, 1992: 9).

Having a status as a refugee grants some rights defined in the 1951 Convention. “Such rights include access to the courts, to primary education, to work, and the provision for documentation, including a refugee travel document in passport form” (UNHCR, 2010: 3) .

A PROTRACTED SITUATION

Protracted situations are situations when refugees are stuck in a refugee camp for a long period of time without the possibility to integrate in the local community, repatriate to their own country, or to resettle to a different (preferable western) country. The UNHCR has a more strict definition of a protracted situation: “UNHCR defines a protracted refugee situation as one in which 25,000 or more refugees of the same nationality have been in exile for five years or longer in any given asylum country” (UNHCR, 2013b: 12). The UNHCR estimated that in 2012 6.4 million refugees found themselves in a protracted situation (UNHCR, 2013b: 6). There were 30 protracted situations located in 25 host countries (UNHCR, 2013b: 12). Even though these situations can be found across the globe, most of them are located in Africa (Crisp, 2003).

The reasons for situations to become protracted vary substantially. The main reasons is, of course, that armed conflicts have a long life-span. Sometimes there is a ceasefire which suddenly escalates in a new conflict. There are also different motives from people who are not really in the conflict because of their attitude towards their opponent, but because of the economic implications a war can have. For

instance, war means business. For some actors war and conflict are essential for economic gain. Politicians, the military, warlords, militia groups, local entrepreneurs and international business concerns earn money by the continuation of an armed conflict (Crisp 2003: 3). Dealers in weaponry are contented if they can continue to sell their goods. But also unemployed people who can suddenly earn some money in the army or in a militia group.

Another reason for conflicts to continue is the lack of motives for intervention from the international community. Industrialized states don't have a lot of reasons to intervene in a conflict, the geopolitical and economic stakes are not really high for those states (Crisp, 2003: 3). If a conflict becomes a security threat for the international community there will be a quicker response, but most of the conflicts in Africa are internal with a lot of ethnical violence.

Even if the conflict has come to an end there are a lot of reasons why refugees refuse to repatriate to their country of origin. Jacobsen (2005), Crisp (2003) and Porter *et al.* (2008) have identified a list of reasons why refugees rather stay in a camp than go back to their home country.

- A lot of people are traumatized with the events that happened during the conflict.
- There is a fear of persecution.
- In some cases the refugee camp has better facilities than the country of origin (there is healthcare, education and the distribution of goods such as food, firewood, blankets etc.)
- Some refugees have found jobs with NGOs, UNHCR or in the local community. Going back to their country of origin there is a possibility that they become unemployed.
- The situation in the country of origin can be worse than before the conflict. Infrastructure can be destroyed, land can become unsuitable to work on because of for example landmines.
- Refugees don't always have the opportunity to repatriate. They can be too young, too old or they are in bad health.
- Some don't have the financial assets to pay for their trip back and even if there is enough money for their trip back, there is also a need for money for the first period after arrival. The repatriates need some time to get everything sorted, cash and other goods will be necessary in order to stay out of deprivation.
- Social networks can be destroyed. Going back to a place where everyone you know has left or has been killed is not something to look forward to. Also, with going back, new networks that emerged in the refugee camp can fall apart.
- Refugees feel integrated in the host community even if they are not allowed to integrate. They have formed social and economic networks with the local communities and sometimes speak the same language.

- There will always be a part of the refugees that wish to resettle in a third country, preferable in the United States of America or Europe. They don't feel the need to repatriate if there is still a chance for resettlement.
- In contrast with the previous reasons there are also refugees who thrive in their new situation. For instance they have started a business. They have become entrepreneurs and are not willing to repatriate and leave their businesses behind.

When a situation becomes protracted there will be some consequences for the refugees in that situation. Humanitarian aid is aimed at meeting emergency needs (Jacobsen, 2005: 2). When the emergency phase has passed and there is a steady-state situation, most of the humanitarian agencies will leave the camp or cut back their spendings. Refugees will find themselves in, what a lot of academics call, a state of limbo (Jansen, 2011; Gale, 2006; De Vriese, 2006).

“Refugees in protracted situations find themselves trapped in a state of limbo: they cannot go back to their homeland, in most cases because it is not safe for them to do so; they are unable to settle permanently in their country of first asylum, because the host state does not want them to remain indefinitely on its territory; and they do not have the option of moving on, as no third country has agreed to admit them and to provide them with permanent residence rights” (Crisp, 2003: 1).

FOCUS OF THESIS

This thesis is focused on camp-based refugees in protracted situations. Refugee camps are mostly placed in remote areas near borders, where there is no infrastructure or economic activity (UNHCR, 2008: 6). After the arrival of refugees infrastructure is build, and economic activity will take place. When a refugee situation becomes protracted there will form an economy that is camp specific.

The reason to focus on protracted situations is as follows: the largest part of protracted situations are to be found in developing countries. The local people in those places are struggling themselves to meet basic needs (UNHCR, 2008). The arrival of a large group of refugees, who will stay for a longer period of time will have an impact on the local community. There will be positive as well negative outcomes on the locals. Humanitarian aid will bring money and goods and that lead to new economic activity in the area. The downside of a large group of refugees will be the pressure on natural resources and the economic capacities of the host states (UNHCR, 2008). A protracted situation means living in exile for more than five years, refugees will have a long time to form new networks and use old ones to improve their livelihood and develop different livelihood strategies. These networks are important in the short as well in the long term. Refugees can use them when humanitarian aid decreases.

The reason to focus on camp-based refugees is that a camp in theory is a secluded space closed off from the surroundings. In practice this is not the case. Refugees bypass the rules of the camp in order to forge a livelihood. It is interesting to look at the coping mechanisms of the refugees to make a refugee camp work for them. Also refugees living in a refugee camp receive aid that can be used in their livelihood strategies.

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

As shown in this chapter, being in a protracted situation has some major implications for refugees to survive and cope in a refugee camp. Refugees develop various livelihood strategies to improve their lives in a refugee camp. These strategies are based on the assets that each individual has. Social networks are one of these assets and can help to improve someone's livelihood. To find out how refugees use their networks and how they maintain them I have formulated a research question:

How do camp-based refugees, who are in a protracted situation, use their networks to shape their livelihoods, and how does this relate to the camp economy?

To answer this question I will focus in chapter two on the UNHCR, NGO's and local authorities and how they frame refugees.

Chapter three on: what are livelihoods and what is a network? And how do people maintain their networks in a refugee camp and put their networks to good use?

In the fourth chapter the focus will be on: what livelihood strategy do refugees have? How do refugees use their networks and how does this relate to the humanitarian aid regime? And how does this all make a refugee camp to become an economic place?

CONTENT OF THIS THESIS

Chapter two focuses on how humanitarian NGO's, the UNHCR, and local authorities perceive refugees. There will be an emphasize on the dependency syndrome, refugees as helpless victims and burden for the local community. And how the policy of the UNHCR and local authorities influence the way refugees are perceived. This chapter also will give some insight on why refugees are framed as burden by the local authorities, and as needy, helpless victims without agency by the NGO's and UNHCR.

Chapter three describes how refugees are not helpless victims but people who use their networks to forge a livelihood. Examples are given on how refugees use their social ties in different livelihood strategies. Each specific tie has implications on how refugees can use them. And how refugees use these ties in their network to forge a livelihood. Also each specific tie has specific implications for the kind of relationship people have with each other.

Chapter four shows that a refugee camp is not a secluded humanitarian place but a social and economical place where refugees have different livelihood strategies. It describes some livelihood strategies and how refugees spread risks by engaging in different livelihood strategies. The refugee camp becomes a place where a specific economy emerges and where refugees try to make their lives as normal as possible.

Chapter five gives a conclusion on how refugees forge their livelihoods and how the humanitarian refugee regime. I will end this thesis with a theoretical claim on why the current refugee discourses should be altered.

METHODOLOGY

This thesis is a literature study. For this first chapter I have used statistical information from the UNHCR, their numbers are based on estimations and registrations of refugees. They give an overview on the current refugee situation and show that there are a decent amount of refugees in a protracted situation. To give some examples on why refugees are in protracted situation I have used information gathered by academics based on their own researches.

Chapter two describes how humanitarian organizations, the UNHCR, and the local authorities perceive refugees. It shows how they influence the lives of refugees, and how they as policy makers and aid givers have a specific outlook on the vulnerability of refugees. I used policy papers of the UNHCR to give an insight in their reasoning on refugee situations. Also papers are used of academics whom have researched humanitarian policy.

In chapter three I have used the theory on strength of the weak ties by Granovetter (1973 & 1983) and the theory on social networks by Portes (1995), they are both sociologists. To explain why people are in a network and how they maintain their social ties with each other, I have used Collins' theory on interaction ritual chains (2004). He has based his micro sociological theory on previous work done by Emile Durkheim and Erving Goffman. I have used these theories as a framework for explaining how social ties in a refugee camp are formed, maintained, and altered.

The fourth chapter is based on empirical research done by academics who are specialized in refugee research. There will be a framework that explains why a refugee camp is an economic place. This will be supported by different case studies.

CHAPTER TWO: REFUGEES THROUGH THE EYES OF AID GIVERS

Most protracted refugee situations are located in developing countries. These developing countries are often not able to fulfill the basic needs of their own citizens. The refugee camps are located in remote and unstable border areas (UNHCR, 2008). These areas are insecure, with harsh climate condition, poor local communities, and not a high priority for the central government and development actors (Crisp, 2003: 6). Due to their remote location there is often limited economic activity and little development (UNHCR, 2008). In case of a protracted situation a refugee camp will influence the surroundings where it is located. The UNHCR, NGOs and local authorities play an important role in how these refugee camps function. They provide aid and for example will improve the infrastructure. But because of their important role they frame the refugees in such a way that it will justify how they provide aid to refugees, and make policy.

The reason for this chapter is to show how refugee discourses are made by aid givers, local government, and even academics. The different discourses justify how they approach refugees, it influences the way refugees are perceived by outsiders, and why according to some academics the refugee regime should be altered. How refugees are framed does not necessarily reflect the real situation.

First it is important to notice that being a refugee is nothing more than a legal status as stated before in chapter one. In current refugee discourses refugees are often problematized (Bakewell, 2003), which makes it harder to see refugees as normal human being living under “abnormal” circumstances. Also the capacity of a refugee to take action is often neglected in the framing of refugees by NGOs, UNHCR and some academics. They are often framed as helpless victims without agency. Agency is a “directed, meaningful, intentional and self-reflective social action” (Chabal, 2009: 7 in Jansen, 2011).

UNHCR NGOS AND LOCAL AUTHORITIES

First of all when there is a crisis with refugees fleeing their home country, the UNHCR will act and take care of the refugees. The UNHCR has policy on how to react in case of an emergency when assistance is needed. This policy is based on the principles of humanity, neutrality and impartiality (UNHCR, 1991). The UNHCR wants that emergency assistance will lead to long-term development and recovery (UNHCR, 1991). Developmental NGOs are supposed to be involved at an early stage of an emergency phase to help and collaborate with humanitarian NGOs (UNHCR, 1991). The role of the UNHCR is to coordinate the activities of the NGOs. Because often there is a lack of government the UNHCR fills in the gap and becomes the organization that makes the rules and makes everyone to live

up to them, even though the UNHCR claims not to be a substitute for government responsibility (Jansen, 2011: 45). The UNHCR and its allies provide the refugees with basic need such as shelter, food, domestic items, primary education and health care (UNHCR, 2008: 13). The UNHCR raises funds and coordinates and funds the NGOs. These NGOs than provide direct assistance to the refugees (Dick, 2002). The UNHCR and NGOs see themselves as the only providers of aid

Not only the aid provision is important because the main focus of the refugee regime is repatriation. Local integration has, according to Crisp (2003: 3-4) not been feasible for several reasons:

- because earlier efforts to promote local settlement and self-reliance in Africa's rural refugee settlements had achieved very limited results;
- because refugees were increasingly regarded as an economic and environmental burden on the countries which hosted them;
- because African countries with large refugee populations felt that the burden they had accepted was not being adequately shared by the world's more prosperous states;
- because many refugee-hosting countries in Africa had declining economies, growing populations and were themselves affected by conflict, instability;
- because refugees came to be regarded (especially after the Great Lakes crisis) as a threat to local, national and even regional security, especially in situations where they were mixed with armed and criminal elements; and,
- because the post-cold war democratization process in some African states meant that politicians had an interest in mobilizing electoral support on the basis of xenophobic and anti-refugee sentiments.

Refugees don't want to or can't repatriate to their home country and local integration is not seen as an option because of the previous mentioned reasons. Refugee situations becoming protracted but hosting refugees is still seen as a temporary situation by developing countries. Refugees don't get the opportunity to become naturalized in the host country and are expected to return to their home country when there is no threat and the crises they fled from is gone (Kibreab, 2004). Despite their apparent temporary nature, refugee camps have become the main living environments for many refugees for many years (Harrell-Bond, 1999:137). A protracted refugee camp is by some academics compared with a warehouse.

THE CAMP AS WAREHOUSE

By some academics a refugee camp is seen as a warehouse, a place where refugees have to wait until they can return to their home country. "Warehousing is the practice of keeping refugees in protracted

situations of restricted mobility, enforced idleness, and dependency – their lives on indefinite hold – in violation of their basic rights under the 1951 UN Refugee Convention (Smith, 2004: 38). The principal members of the international refugee regime used to implement long-term 'care-and-maintenance' programmes. According to Crisp, these programmes did nothing to promote self-reliance amongst refugees or to facilitate positive interactions between the exiled and local populations (Crisp, 2003: 4). Even though the UNHCR claimed to have stopped with the care-and-maintenance programmes, refugees are still trapped in “limbo”. “They cannot go home (repatriation), they cannot settle permanently in their country of asylum (local integration), and they do not have the option of moving to a country which has agreed to receive them (resettlement)” (deVriese, 2006: 27). Refugees are left to live in camps indefinitely, without rights and with no ability to forge a livelihood (UNHCR, 2008). Donor states become less interested which lead to declining support and deterioration of the quality of life in camps (UNHCR, 2008). With less support and a decline in life standard, refugees look for negative coping mechanisms: high levels of survival sex, sexual and gender based violence, conflicts within the refugee community and between refugees and local populations, onward movements to other countries and growing vulnerability to trafficking (UNHCR,2008:13). Smith is an academic who has a strong opinion on “warehousing”: “condemning people who fled persecution to stagnate in confinement for much of the remainder of their lives is unnecessary, wasteful, hypocritical, counterproductive, unlawful, and morally unacceptable” (Smith, 2004: 38). One of the features of warehousing is that it creates dependency amongst the refugees. It makes refugees into people who are not able to take action (Smith, 2004).

The camp has also become a place where aid-givers and camp administrators can violate refugees' rights, because there is no control on what they do (Smith,2004, 39). Smith (2004) even talks about assistance-related sexual exploitation, where aid-givers abuse their power over the refugees. According to Smith (2004) warehousing leads to security problems, it can aggravate existing ones and create new ones, for example refugee camps are a good place for war criminals to hide.

Warehoused refugees don't have any control over their own lives. Smith describes a situation in where a refugee is disempowered in any way to take action of their own life.

“I like it here. The Camp Commander is bringing me food. There is no other place I could go to. I am just like a child now. I don't know where I am, I don't know where to go. I am like a blind person who doesn't know what will happen in the future. We refugees are like small children, we only follow what the Camp Commander says and orders. As I am under the umbrella of UNHCR it is impossible for me to move of my own accord. It is up to them. They choose our life. We don't have any suggestions as refugees, it is UNHCR who have all the suggestions. I know nothing, unless people like you take me. I am like a monkey of the bush. I know nothing that I can do” (Smith, 2004, 42).

According to the activist academics, warehousing marginalizes refugees, it is a top down approach of refugee policy.

Not only influences warehousing the lives of refugees, it has also distorts local economies (Smith, 2004: 39-40). According to Smith (2004) local economies have to compete with refugees who sell (parts of) their food rations. This is strange because Smith (2004) says that warehoused refugees are not economical active, he contradicts himself by saying that refugees will sell their food rations.

It is not UNHCRs' aim to warehouse large amounts of refugees. But through policy refugees are not encouraged to forge a livelihood.

The framing of a protracted refugee camp as warehouse is done by a group of activist academics. They want to change the way refugees are aided. They want the NGOs and UNHCR to change their policy and provide refugees with aid in such a way that their lives are improved instead of wasted. Smith for example want the refugee regime to be changed because, according to him, warehoused refugees become people without agency who are for hundred percent dependent on the mood of the aid-givers and if they are willing to give the aid that they should provide. By framing the refugee camp as a warehouse, refugees are at the same time framed as helpless victims who are not capable of changing anything in their lives. A refugee camp is almost seen as a prison. The activist discourse dismisses the fact that even though refugees are (partially) dependent on aid, they are capable people with agency who can and will take action to improve their lives in a refugee camp. They do not become helpless victims without any possible way to get out of their situation.

Refugees' choices in how to forge a livelihood are limited due to the fact that there are rules and restrictions in a refugee camp.

RIGHTS AND RESTRICTIONS

Refugee policy makes host countries treat refugees different than their own citizens. There are a lot of restrictions that are only applicable for refugees and not for locals. These restrictions do often not match with refugee law based on the 1951 UN Convention. Also these policies frustrate the ability of refugees to construct sustainable livelihoods (Kibreab, 2004: 58) The main policy factors preventing refugees' pursuit of livelihoods are according to Jacobsen (2002: 103):

- host governments' desire that refugees be allowed only as temporary guests (no permanent residence);
- poor standards of protection and physical security for refugees;
- restrictions on freedom of movement and settlement; and

- restrictions on property rights and employment.

These restrictions are contradictory to refugee law as stated in the UN Convention. According to article 26 of the UN Convention, refugees are allowed to choose their place of residence and to move freely within its territory (UNHCR, 2010: 27). In a lot of protracted situations refugees are not allowed to travel outside the camp (Crisp, 2003: 11). And if they are allowed in many cases refugees need travel permits to travel outside the refugee camp. These permits are restrictive on the economic activities of refugees. They prevent them from participating in more lucrative markets, they increase the uncertainty for participation in outside markets, and they increase the time costs of participating in these outside markets (Werker, 2007: 464). It takes a lot of time, effort and money to access travel permits. The rights of refugees to be economically active outside the camp are ignored or overruled by the host countries (Jacobsen, 2005: 15). Looking for job opportunities outside the camp are often prohibited. Even if refugees are allowed to work outside the camp they need a working permit, and for trading outside the camp refugees need a trading licence (Werker, 2007). Crisp says that there are academics who think that these restrictions are created to benefit the UNHCR and NGOs. According to some critics: NGOs and the UNHCR will benefit in maintaining the “relief model” of refugee assistance (Crisp, 2003:4). To do so they need refugee camps to be entirely separately from the surrounding area and population (ibid.).

There are often also restrictions on political activity, based on the fact that it is supposed to be a threat on the security in the camps. But not all political groups are a security threat. By forming a political group, refugees can bargain for institutional changes as taxes lowering which will have a positive impact on the refugees’ economic situation (Werker, 2007: 466).

The UN convention allows host countries to claim taxes up to the level that nationals pay, but in most cases it is not applied to refugees living in the refugee camps (Werker, 2007)

The policy of local governments are based on the fact that they want to maintain refugees in a camp. To do so they frame refugees as a burden which need policy to counteract that.

REFUGEES ARE A BURDEN

Through the eyes of the local governments, refugees are not seen as a blessing, on the contrary they are seen as a burden. They put significant pressure on the local and national capacities of the host state (UNHCR, 2008). Refugees are perceived as a threat for local and national security, they compete with locals for jobs, and they deteriorate natural resources.

Refugees are sometimes perceived as a threat to local and national stability. Refugees fleeing warzones can lead to a spill-over effect where host countries and refugee camps become vulnerable for

fighting groups. Warlords can move in to a refugee camp when they fear persecution and make it for other refugees as well as local communities a threat to their security.

Secondly the host populations are afraid of their position in the labour market when talented and skilled refugees enter their surroundings. They have to compete for jobs, which lead to oversaturated labour markets, and decline in wages (UNHCR, 2008). With more people entering markets, prices for produce will rise with consequences for the local community because they don't receive food rations from the NGOs (UNHCR, 2008).

Lastly refugees put great pressure on the local natural resources. "The host community feels that there is marked deterioration of a number of resources, most notably land, wood, game and fish" (Crisp, 2003: 18).

Refugees are framed by the local politicians as a burden, but this hasn't always been the case. There has been a major shift in attitude towards refugees in African countries. Before 1990 there was an "open door policy", where refugees were hardly ever rejected into the country of asylum (Rutinwa, 1999: 1).

"Even though refugees were normally required to remain in camps, the standards of treatment of refugees were adequate and refugees enjoyed security rights, basic dignity rights as well as self-sufficiency rights. There was also a strong commitment to durable solutions. A number of refugees were locally integrate and legally naturalized." (Rutinwa, 1999: 1).

There are several reasons why local government shifted from an open attitude towards refugees to an attitude in which refugees are seen as a burden. "While elsewhere in the world the number of refugees has decreased, in Africa, the refugee problem has grown both in magnitude and complexity" (Rutinwa, 1999:1). The number of refugees has expanded and with that also the pressure on local communities and governments.

Host governments want to make sure that everyone knows that a refugee camp is a temporarily solution. They are afraid that if they have less resistance towards refugees, refugees will think that they are granted the freedom to permanently settle and that this will lead to a mass influx of refugees looking for a permanent place to stay (Smith, 2004). Countries that place refugees in an encampment receive more money than when the refugees are integrated in the local community (Smith, 2004).

By framing refugees as burden host countries show that they want to be compensated for taking care of a large group of refugees. Donors will build roads, irrigation and drainage system, and buildings in settlement areas to compensate the host country for being hospitable and granting refugees access to the country (Smith, 2004). It also shows that host countries only want to help for a limited time, refugee camps should according to them be an exception and not a permanent place to stay.

DEPENDENT ON AID

According to Horst, Refugees are only seen as receivers of humanitarian assistance by the UNHCR and NGOs (Horst, 2008). Horst says that refugees are, according to humanitarians, demanding and totally dependent on international aid (Horst, 2008). Even host governments think, according to Bakewell (2003), that refugees need to stop being so dependent. Whilst living in a protracted refugee settlement, refugees become unable to take action. They become dependent on aid and are not able to make a living and becoming self-sufficient. Being trapped in limbo and been taking care of by NGOs and the UNHCR makes that their lives are not at risk, but their basic rights and essential economic, social and psychosocial needs remain unfulfilled (deVriese, 2006: 27). When refugees are not able to provide for themselves, even if there are possibilities in maintaining a livelihood, and are totally dependent on aid then they fall in the category of a dependency syndrome. There are certain symptoms that are typically for a dependency syndrome such as: lethargy, (domestic) violence, and frustration (Jansen, 2011: 132). The reason that refugees develop a dependency syndrome is according deVriese based on the fact that during a protracted refugee situation people's resilience is broken down (2006: 27). The assistance that is been given makes refugees less productive, livelihoods tend to shift from an initial attempt to maintain self-sufficiency to the expectation that assistance will be provided indefinitely (deVriese, 2006: 27).

This dependency syndrome is something that a lot of academics do not agree with. "Rather than being passive recipients of aid refugees are in fact capable of making the aid regime work for them in ways they deem appropriate for facilitating their own rehabilitation and development while in exile" (Dick, 2002: 2). The dependency of refugees that humanitarians claim to exist is based on the fact that refugees' survival strategies are partly invisible for the NGOs (Jansen, 2011). Also the meaning of being dependent on aid is that there are no alternatives for refugees than receiving aid. This aid can also be a small part of a larger livelihood strategy, when aid becomes essential in order to maintain a living. To decrease the dependency on aid refugees should be allowed to gain access to resources, have the freedom to move, and are allowed to work (Jacobsen, 2002: 96).

A lot of refugees are (partly) dependent on aid. But they are willing to make the best out of the situation and try to become more self-sufficient. The dependency on aid maintains only because there is a lack of opportunities for refugees to make a living and become independent (Jansen, 2011). Also refugees sometimes pretend to be more dependent on aid than they actually are. Being vulnerable and dependent on aid will grant more aid, it becomes for some refugees a livelihood strategy (Bakewell, 2003).

Being dependent on aid is almost seen as something that is created by refugees themselves. But UNHCR policy plays a role in creating dependency, and makes it harder for refugees to become self-

sufficient (Bakewell, 2003). Also The host government restricting refugees to engage in economic activities makes refugees more dependent on aid (Bakewell, 2003).

All these discourses fall short in explaining the lives of refugees. Also they are sometimes not even true or deny facts. By looking at the refugee from different angles it shows that some discourses are flawed. The reality shows that the lives of refugees are multi faceted and more complex than is described in the discourses.

IN REALITY

The reality shows that the current refugee discourses are only focused on a certain aspect of a refugees live. But also that the discourses are not reflecting the reality. For example in many parts of Africa refugees are self settled and manage to support themselves without international assistance (Crisp, 2003). This local integration is a livelihood strategy that can be successful for some refugees (Crisp, 2003) even if it is not supported by policy. In some cases it would be feasible for refugees to integrate in local communities to spread the pressure on the local community nearby the refugee camps. The potential for integration are according to Crisp (2003: 25-6):

- when refugees have moved into an area which is populated by people of the same ethnic origin;
- when refugees have moved into an area where there is a surplus of agricultural land or where other economic opportunities exist;
- when refugees have been able to establish sustainable livelihoods but where their legal status and residence rights remain unresolved; and,
- when a ‘residual caseload’ of refugees has established strong social and economic links to their country of asylum.

Even though refugees in protracted situations are not allowed to move around freely by their host country, a lot of them do move around (Crisp, 2003: 11). If refugees are able to exercise their rights to work, move around freely, and practice their profession, it is likely that refugees would be able to support themselves and their families in their host country (Jacobsen, 2005: 69) The international community in recent years has realized that refugees should be ‘assisted to assist themselves’, and could become agents of development in the region that host them (Horst, 2006: 6).

The UNHCR is aware of the fact that the arrival and long-term presence of refugees van have a positive influence on the host community and area (UNHCR, 2008). The facilities in the refugee camps can create new economic opportunities, providing improved community services, education, and health services. Refugee camps also attract humanitarian development and private sector resources

where locals also can benefit from (UNHCR, 2008: 6-7). With the implementation of self-reliance programmes the UNHCR tries to improve the lives of refugees. They try to empower refugees and local communities so that they would be able to support themselves and try to establish mechanisms that will make integration of services for refugees and nationals happen (UNHCR, 2003:3).

CONCLUSION

Being a refugee is nothing more than a legal status. By framing a refugee as a burden, or someone who is dependent on aid, and “stacked in a warehouse”, refugees are not seen as social human beings with agency who can influence and alter their lives in a refugee camp. The UNHCR, NGOs and local communities see refugees only from their point of view. It makes that humanitarian policy is based on their assumptions on how refugees live in the camps. Warehousing is a term invented by activist academics who want the refugee regime to change their policy. According to them warehousing makes refugees, passive human being with no agency and no will to change their lives. Warehousing as an expression makes refugee camps look like prisons. It denies the fact that refugees are capable of influencing and changing their own lives. Refugees do have agency and try to make the best out of their situation. Framing refugees as burden is based on local policy making. Without burden there is no burden-sharing. By framing refugees as burden governments can invoke the help of donors and other countries. Refugees are dependent on aid but they don't develop a dependency syndrome. By framing a refugee as dependent on aid and becoming lethargic academics deny the fact that, as also discussed by warehousing, refugees are capable human beings with agency.

There are restrictions on movement and trade, but in reality refugees find ways to move in and out of the camp and engage in trade and other economic activities.

Even though it looks like the UNHCR only is able to give humanitarian assistance, they try to improve refugees' lives. By implementing self-reliance programmes refugees are given the opportunity with the consent of the UNHCR to explore their options and forge a livelihood.

The next chapter shows how refugees use their agency to create and maintain social networks with other refugees, humanitarian agencies, local communities, and people who still live in the country of origin or are settled in a third country. It shows how they are not passive victims waiting for the day that they can return to their country of origin because refugees not only rely on what is provided for by the UNHCR and NGOs.

CHAPTER THREE: THE IMPORTANCE OF SOCIAL TIES IN A REFUGEE CAMP

The previous chapter explains how the UNHCR and other humanitarian NGOs perceive refugees and how their policy is focused on the aid dependency of refugees. The UNHCR and NGOs are according to themselves the only aid givers and claim to have a monopoly position on distributing aid. In this chapter there will be an emphasis on the agency of refugees and how they shape their lives in refugee camps by adopting different livelihood strategies based on their social network. A part of the functioning of the strategies is based on the interaction of refugees with others within the camp and also with people outside the camp. This chapter also shows that in contrast with what has been said in chapter two, refugees are actors with agency and with the help of their networks they make a living in the refugee camp.

LIVELIHOODS

Livelihood as a concept is used to give a better understanding on how refugees shape their lives in refugee camps. Ellis (2000:10) defines livelihood as follows: “A livelihood comprises the assets (natural, physical, human, financial and social capital), the activities, and the access to these (mediated by institutions and social relations) that together determine the living gained by the individual or household”. Not only access to assets plays a role. Access to social and public services, such as education, health services and infrastructure can improve assets. Gender and class can have an influence on the access to new assets as well to social and public services (Ellis, 2000: 9).

Ellis (2000: 8) defines the assets as follows:

- Natural capital: natural resource base (land, water, trees) that yields products utilized by human populations for their survival.
- Physical capital: assets brought into existence by economic production processes, for example, tools, machines, and land improvements like terraces or irrigation canals.
- Human capital: education level and health status of individuals and populations.
- Financial capital: stocks of cash that can be accessed in order to purchase either production or consumption goods, and access to credit might be included in this category.
- Social capital: social networks and associations in which people participate, and from which they can derive support that contributes to their livelihoods.

Each individual has a different set of assets which can vary through time. In the case of refugees there is a shift in assets because of their flight. When people flee they lose assets. They are stolen, destroyed or are used up for the journey getting away from the conflict (Jacobsen, 2005). To survive people

develop certain livelihood strategies that will vary for each individual. Livelihood strategies are activities that can be undertaken based on assets, access and opportunities. Fluctuations in assets and opportunities force people to adapt, and look for new ways to pursue a livelihood. By diversifying livelihood strategies risks can be reduced (Ellis, 2000). Refugees often don't possess a lot of physical assets when they arrive in a refugee camp. But they do bring assets into the camp such as skills, and an education level. Also they bring their social capital. They stay connected with the people outside the camp who are part of their network. Social capital in the form of networks are important for gaining access to other forms of capital (Horst, 2006). Although networks can be destroyed by flight, in many cases it doesn't happen and patterns of assistance are still intact (Horst, 2006: 11).

NETWORKS

As stated before social capital is one of the assets people can have. A big part of social capital are social networks. In Castells' (2004: 3) words: "A network is a set of interconnected nodes" of course there is more to networks than this short definition. Networks exist of persons who are connected through occupational, familial, cultural, or affective ties (Portes, 1995: 8). Every network has a different layout with different social outcomes. Portes (1995: 9-10) describes five different dimensions where networks exist of:

- Size, the amount of persons in a network.
- Density, the amount of ties between each person in a network compared to the maximum amount of ties possible in a network. The highest density possible, is when every person in a network is tied to all the other persons in that network.
- Centrality, when one person is tied to a certain amount of other persons, without those other persons tied to one another, he becomes a central point in that network. If one has a central place in a network, than that persons has power in a sense that he can decide if and what kind of information or resources will be passed from one person to another person.
- Clustering, this occurs when the density of ties between persons of a small part of the network is higher than the density of the network as a whole.
- Multiplexity refers to when people have multiple ties between them. Persons can for example be connected through familial ties and occupational ties at the same time.

These dimensions have implications for how networks function and how people can make their network work for them. For example large and dense networks are most effective in developing normative expectations and enforcing reciprocity obligations (Portes, 1995: 9). These are essential for refugees livelihood strategies, for example rotating savings and credit associations (ROSCAS). These

ROSCAS are based on mutual trust and reciprocity (Besley *et al.*, 1993) and are a source of money for refugees.

SOCIAL TIES

Not only the network as a whole has implications for the functioning of the refugee network. The ties between individuals are as well important because each type of tie defines a different sort of relationship and interaction. It is likely to get a strong connection when there is a shared identity (Jacobsen, 2002)

To explain the differences between ties, Granovetter's theory on the strength of weak ties will be used. Granovetter (1973) distinguishes three different situations between individuals in a network: in the first situation there is no connection between individuals, ties are absent. Even though two persons don't share a tie they can be part of the same network. The absent tie can become a weak or strong tie if the two persons interact. Based on the fact that they are in the same network there is a chance that the two people have something in common.

In the second and third situation there is a tie between individuals which he sets apart in weak and strong ties. There is no definite dividing line between strong and weak ties. It is an intuitive classification in what is a strong and what is a weak tie (Granovetter, 1973). People connected through strong ties can be classified as friends and people connected through weak ties as acquaintances. Strong ties are more reciprocal than weak ties and are essential for social safety nets.

Weak and strong ties have some implications for the networks they are part of. Each individual has a number of ties with other individuals. When one tie between two individuals is strong it is likely that their networks will overlap (Granovetter, 1973). When there is a weak tie, the network of each individual is less likely to overlap or a smaller part of their network will overlap (*ibid.*). When there is no tie at all the chances are very small that the networks will overlap (*ibid.*). Weak ties are not useful as social safety nets, but are essential for exploring new opportunities and access to new information. In networks with strong ties there is a lot of overlap between the connections, the consequences are that everyone is fishing in the same "information and opportunity pond" which is not helpful in finding new livelihood strategies to becoming self-sufficient.

It is not just the strength or weakness of a tie that contributes to the role of each of these types of ties in information exchange. "Each type of tie indicates the nature of an individual's connectedness within one or more networks, which in turn affects exposure to specific kinds of information" (Haythornthwaite, 1996: 328). For example refugees can have strong ties with family and friends, but

these ties have different origins. People can choose with who they are becoming friends, but with whom they are blood related is fixed.

In refugee camps social networks and social ties are important. They can give refugees an opportunity to forge a livelihood. For example in refugee camps there is often a shortage in cash. Refugees need their network to access money. There are two examples of ways for refugees to get money through their networks, ROSCAS and remittances. ROSCAS are based on the principle of reciprocity and social control in a network. Remittances are based on strong ties with mainly family in third countries.

ROSCAS

Rotating savings and credit associations (ROSCAS) are “an association formed upon a core of participants who agree to make regular contributions to a fund which is given, in whole or in part, to each contributor in rotation” (Ardener, 1964: 201). It is an informal way of saving money which doesn't involve a bank or other formal financial institution.

ROSCAS can be an opportunity for refugees who are not able to borrow money in a conventional way. Banks are normally not interested in providing small loans (Ardener, 1964: 218), and besides that there are normally no banks or microfinance institutions in refugee camps, apart from loan programs through NGOs (Jacobsen, 2005: 29). For ROSCAS to function there is one condition very important: every person who participates in a ROSCA is obliged to pay their part even after they have received their share. This is in most cases not problematic because of the individuals' social connectedness in the network (Besley *et al.*, 1993). Participants have to keep their commitment which is enforced through the sanctions that are imminent if one is not able to fulfill their obligations. Sanctions can for example be that an individual is not allowed to join a new ROSCA in the future or that they are excluded from social activities (Besley *et al.*, 1993). The social connectedness in a ROSCA is based on the fact that participants are well known to each other (*ibid.*). In some ROSCAS there is a build-in social safety net. Whenever someone has a good reason and is not able to fulfill their payment obligations there are other participants who can make an extra payment. The defaulter is then also indebted with another individual but because of the social safety net there is an even better social control with more extensive sanctions (Besley *et al.*, 1993:807). Being in a ROSCA means being in a dense network, where everyone is connected to each other. In a ROSCA every participant is familiar with the others financial circumstances, without that it can become a risk to participate. The size of a ROSCA is dependent on the fact that everyone has to know each other. With large ROSCAS there will be more money to access, but the downside is that there is less social control possible (Besley *et al.*, 1993). ROSCAS are in most cases successful, there are no defaulters because “a person may hesitate

long before destroying his reputation before a large circle of friends or relatives” (Ardener 1964: 218). ROSCAS are basically self-formed banks within a refugee camp.

“ Women in the Somali Bantu community in Kakuma reported participating in merry go round (called *Mavuno*) where members contribute approximately 100 Ksh in some group and others 500 Ksh (depends on the ability of the members), and the cash is given to one member. They take turns until everyone has received the contribution per cycle. In some groups they are also able to borrow cash and repay with interest” (WFP, 2014: 52).

ROSCAS are typically associated with seclusion sites where there is little connection with the outside world. Because of the internet and mobile phones it is easier to access money from outside the camp in the form of remittances, but not every refugee has relatives or close friends who are able to send remittances. For these people ROSCAS are an opportunity to access a larger sum of money without the interference of a bank or moneylender.

For the people who do have relatives living outside the camp, remittances can become an extra source for money.

REMITTANCES

Remittances are defined as an “income (in any form) received by a household in one distinct place, from individuals or households living in another place” (Savage and Harvey, 2007: 3). Most of the time remittances are send in the form of cash, but sometime they are send as in-kind such as: maize-meal, sugar, salt, cooking oil, consumer goods, agricultural inputs and building materials (Pieke et al., 2007: 353) cars, furniture, jewellery, clothing and electronic goods (Ahmed, 2000:353).

Where ROSCAS are mainly based on connections within the refugee camp, remittance are based on ties between refugees inside the camp and people outside the camp. The person who sends the remittances is in most cases resettled in a third (Western) country. The ties between senders and receivers of remittances cross national borders which lead to a transnational network. It is important to notice that remittances are only send between two people who have a strong tie.

There are multiple methods to send remittances: it can be transferred by Western Union (Porter, 2008), a Hawilaad network (Crisp, 2003), or hand carrying (Pieke et al., 2007)

Western Union: a online money transfer company.

Hawilaad: a value transfer system, where the customer gives money to an agent who then communicates to a corresponding agent in the receiving country what sum of money has to been given to a certain person (Pieke et al., 2007: 352). The money transfer agent makes money on the transaction through a fee or by other means (ibid.).

Hand carrying: this happens when refugees are on a return visit. They bring money back to the camp. It also often happens that money is been given to a trusted relative, friend or prominent person (Pieke et al., 2007). Remittances are mainly send by a large Diaspora situated in Western countries.

There are three types of remittances that can be distinguished: ‘emergency aid’, ‘care and maintenance money’, and ‘sustainable development aid’ (Horst, 2008: 125). Emergency aid is the most requested form of aid. For the aid senders the emergency aid has the highest priority, it can be send in case of personal emergencies such as birth of death, or diseases, floods and droughts (Horst, 2008: 125). The care and maintenance aid is “only an absolute obligation of close relatives” (Horst, 2006:126). Only people with the strongest ties and with enough resources are obliged to help.

The good thing about remittances is that they benefit refugee populations as a whole, and not simply those individuals and households who receive the cash (Crisp, 2003: 23). The extra cash is distributed outside the receivers’ family and flows into the camps economy (Horst, 2002).

The frequency with which remittances are send depends on the financial status of the sender, the willingness of the sender or if they feel obliged to send remittances, or if the receiver of the remittances is in need for cash or other forms of remittances.

When refugees are in need of help they will actively look for people who can help them out by sending remittances. Or as a refugee says it “Calling Liberia gives us courage and call to USA/Europe gives us our meal” (Porter, 2008: 248).

Even though remittances are often send on a regular basis it is often not possible to used them in a sustainable way. Remittances can be therefore be classified as aid for relief or “care and maintenance” money (Horst, 2008: 129). It is not that the receivers don’t want to make the remittances work for a more sustainable cause, it is because they need the remittances in their day-to-day lives.

INTERACTION RITUALS

To understand why people become and are connected in a network and why people feel obliged to help one other in a network I use the theory of Collins (2004) on interaction rituals (IR) to explain this phenomenon. Collins describes with his theory on IR how, through rituals, ties are formed and reinforced. A single encounter between two people is not enough to form a tie. Collins uses the word “ritual” not as a word to describe a sacred ritual with step by step activities, he uses the word in a broader way. A ritual is in his definition is for example shaking someone’s hand or hugging a close friend after seeing that person in a long while. He uses it in day to day interactions where people acknowledge and reinforce their mutual bond or social tie. “Ritual is a mechanism of mutually focused emotion and attention producing a momentarily shared reality, which thereby generates solidarity and

symbols of group membership” (Collins, 2004:7). Before an interaction ritual takes place there are some requirements that are essential (Collins, 2004: 48):

- Two or more people are physically assembled in the same place, so that they affect each other by their bodily presence, whether it is in the foreground of their conscious attention or not.
- There are boundaries to outsiders so that participants have a sense of who is taking part and who is excluded.
- People focus their attention upon a common object or activity, and by communicating this focus to each other become mutually aware of each other’s focus of attention.
- They share a common mood or emotional experience

The two latter ingredients reinforce each other. When there is a meeting between two individuals, with boundaries to outsiders, and there is a mutual focus, and a mutual emotional experience a interaction ritual takes place. This IR leads according to Collins (2004: 49) to:

- Group solidarity, a feeling of membership;
- Emotional energy (EE) in the individual: a feeling of confidence, elation, strength, enthusiasm, and initiative in taking action;
- Symbols that represent the group: emblems or other representations (visual icons, words, gestures) that members feel are associated with themselves collectively. Persons pumped up with feelings of group solidarity treat symbols with great respect and defend them against the disrespect of outsiders, and even more, of renegade insiders.
- Feelings of morality: the sense of rightness in adhering to the group, respecting its symbols, and defending both against transgressors. Along with this goes the sense of moral evil or impropriety in violating the group’s solidarity and its symbolic representations.

In refugee camps these new ties can be formed and reinforced in a variety of settings. There are for instance markets, bars, video shops, churches, pool halls and sports fields (Jansen, 2011). In these public places people meet each other and have the opportunity to form new ties and broaden their networks. Jansen (2011: 156-7) describes a case where the Refugee Aid Workers Union of Kakuma (RAWUK), a civil society movement, meet up “playing chess, reading, and talking over tea or coffee”. This is an example of a IR where people are bodily present, there are boundaries between people who are in RAWUK and people who are not, they shared a common goal (equal wage distribution), which will all lead to group solidarity and a feeling of belonging.

The interaction rituals don’t have to take place between people with the same background. Refugees with various nationalities have economic interactions with each other (Betts *et al.*, 2014) . They are in their economic interactions not limited to refugees with the same nationality. Even though refugees have different nationalities or ethnicity they can form ties and interact with each other. This can be

explained by Collins' theory, because the refugees share a common mood for example they want to trade and by making it a good experience they will continue to trade in the future.

Social ties are not only used for access to money, but can be used for protection, company, and support (Gale, 2006). For example Sierra Leonan woman who are vulnerable arrange a partnership with men in the refugee camp, who can give them protection and support in exchange for food rations (Gale, 2006: 77). These so called "bulgur marriages" are not the only relationships these woman are involved in, it is just one strategy amongst many.

SAFETY NETS AND SPREADING RISKS

Not everyone living in the camp has connections outside the camp that can send remittances. Some refugees have to rely on their networks inside the camp. Without a job, refugees only rely on aid provided by the NGOs. But people with jobs in the formal sector can rely on. One woman who is employed by the Red Crescent Society says that even though the wages are low she gets access to nurses for herself and her family (Oka, 2011).

Refugee households strategize their settlement to diversify their resources. They will place some members in camps to access resources there sometimes even placing members in different refugee camps, and place others outside in the host community where a different set of resources can be targeted (Jacobsen, 2002: 104). Also newly formed networks are less likely to overlap when the family members are physically separated. This make that they can access larger networks with new information and opportunities.

CONNECTED WITH LOCALS

Refugees inside the camp are often connected with locals living outside the camp. Often locals are at first not very welcoming to the refugee. They are afraid that refugees put a big pressure on local natural resources (Berry, 2008). The tension between the refugees and locals is also enforced by the fact that refugee are not allowed to move around freely. There is no contact between the groups which leads to suspicion. Conflicts can occur when personal interaction between refugees and hosts is prohibited (Berry, 2008). Social relationships and cultural exchange between refugees and host communities can reduce the competition, isolation and segregation between the two groups (Felleson, 2003 in Berry, 2008).

Refugees often interact with the local community at common markets (Berry, 2008). Refugees were employed by the locals and even though refugees were not allowed to leave the camp and work

outside, there were still refugees who did (Berry, 2008: 13). Not all interactions between locals and refugees is based on economic activities. In Tanzania there are also marriages between locals and refugees (Berry, 2008). Also sharing medical services that are provided in the camps can make locals and refugees interact.

The problems that occur between refugees and locals are often avoidable. The problems can be reduced by making sure that refugees are not in a better position than the locals. It is also important that there is more interaction between the two groups for instance by allowing them to trade.

NETWORKS ARE EVERYWHERE

Refugees are part of various kinds of networks.

- They are connected with other refugees in the same camp, these connections can be newly formed inside the camp or they pre-existed before they arrived in the refugee settlement.
- They can have transnational connections, with people who are still in their home country (Porter, 2008) or with people who are settled in a third country.
- They can be connected with the local community for multiple reasons such as, trade partners, jobs,
- Also refugees who receive aid by humanitarian organizations are also connected with for example the UNHCR.

Connections with the outside world are important. People from within the camp try to be connected with people in their home countries, or family in different camps or in resettlement places. These transnational connections exist and are maintained by the internet and mobile phones. In the past the internet wasn't as widespread as it is today. The way people connect with each other has become easier by technological improvements. The reason to stay in touch with people from the home country is to get information on the status of the crises, refugees can decide based on that information if they want and can go back to their home country.

CONCLUSION

To forge a livelihood refugees use their assets. In a refugee camp social capital is very important as it can give access to other forms of capital. Networks play an important role in the lives of refugees. The social ties between persons in a network are determinative in what kind of relationship refugees are in. With strong ties refugees have the option to receive remittances. With strong and weak ties in a dense network refugees have the opportunity to access money through a ROSCA. With the theory on

interaction rituals there is explained how refugees can form and maintain their networks. Social interaction is for refugees without other forms of capital a livelihood strategy.

Because refugees want to spread their risks they will expand their networks. This is done by interacting with NGOs and local communities. There is for refugees also a way to expand their network by physically moving around. By splitting the family and placing members in different places networks are expanded. With large networks refugees can access new sources that weren't available for them in a small network.

It is important to notice that refugees have many options to expand their network because networks are everywhere. Every person involved in a refugee camp has the potential to become a new node in a network of a refugee.

The next chapter shows what refugees do to forge a livelihood in a refugee camp besides networking. It shows that refugees are inventive in finding new opportunities and spreading risks. It makes that refugees by using their network can access new opportunities and how refugees implement them in their livelihood strategies.

CHAPTER FOUR: THE CAMP AS ECONOMIC PLACE

In the previous chapter attention is been giving to social capital and how social networks are an important part of refugee livelihood strategies. Refugees don't rely only on social capital but diversify their strategies to reduce risks. When a crisis becomes protracted and humanitarian organizations leave the refugee camps or cut back on their expenses, refugees become more and more dependent on their own innovative ways to maintain their livelihoods. It is important to recognize that most part of the economic activity in camps is in the informal sector. Formal jobs within the camps are sparse. Most formal jobs are only available for educated refugees with western language skills. People with the right credentials and skills can become employed by the UNHCR or NGOs as interpreters, cleaners, teachers, nurses, food distributors, clerks (Jansen, 2011:61). There are also few formal jobs available for refugees outside the camps (Porter, 2008). Informal economic activity is often not taken into account by humanitarians. The informal activities are mostly located within the boundaries of the camp, or somewhere nearby (Porter, 2008). There are also illegal livelihood strategies such as con games, scams, crime, selling drugs, and prostitution (Jacobsen, 2005; Porter, 2008).

LIVELIHOOD STRATEGIES

Most of the by refugees pursued economic activities take place in the informal sector and some of them are illegal or undesirable. Jacobsen (2005: 11) lists common economic activities such as:

- Buying and selling goods like firewood, charcoal, vegetables, prepared food, cigarettes, and sweets, on a daily basis (hawking);
- Services provided by hair dressers/beauticians, mechanics, food preparation, construction, telephone booths (where individual calls on a cell phone are sold), and courier services (including carrying money and other goods between town and villages);
- Special services by and for refugees like language tutoring or interpreting.

The livelihood strategies listed above can be seen as the more accepted activities in order to maintain livelihoods. Kibreab (2004: 1) and Crisp (2003: 19-21) recognize the more undesirable strategies:

- Cheating the system, to disadvantage UNHCR and other aid providers (including collusion with host government officials, inflating numerical sizes of families for purposes of registration, withholding of information on deaths, registration in different sites, double or even triple registration, splitting of families between different camps, exhibition of physical helplessness in the presence of aid givers, keeping children undernourished so they qualify for special feeding programmes.

- Illegal and unsustainable farming
- Sexual exploitation such as commercial prostitution and sexual acts in exchange for goods and gifts
- Exploitative employment, low wages caused by the large group of refugees looking for employment to make ends meet.

The livelihood strategies listed above are not the only ones that are practiced by refugees. Besides that there are more actors than the refugees in it who influence the camp economy. These other actors are aid givers from NGOs en the UNHCR, local governments and their policy, local communities who are active in the refugee camp economy, traders, resettled refugees, people who stayed in their home country but are still connected with the refugees in the camp, and so on. It is a misconception that refugee camps are secluded sites with no one else coming in besides refugees and aid givers, and no refugee is able to outside the camp. Refugees' lives are not shut off from the world outside the refugee camp (Betts *et al.*, 2014: 10). Even though the refugee camps are placed in remote areas they attracts goods, people and capital from outside their internal markets (Betts *et al.*, 2014: 10).

ENTREPRENEURS

In refugee camps there is a need for money (Jacobsen, 2005). For starting an own business money is often needed as an investment. Refugees normally can't access money via banks, and moneylenders ask very high interest rates. There are some options for refugees to access money. As established before in chapter three ROSCAS and remittances can be important to get some extra money. As an entrepreneur, people have to be inventive. They have to find a profession with less as possible competition. Entrepreneurs in refugee camps find markets with a demand that is high enough to become profitable. Being an entrepreneur gives refugees the opportunity to become self-sufficient. Refugees, like anybody else, have a very strong wish to gain self-sufficiency (Horst, 2006). They try to do this based on their existing qualities and skills (Horst, 2006).

The entrepreneurial activities are mostly informal and some are even illegal. Porter describes a couple of entrepreneurial activities of Liberians in Ghana (2008:238).

- Running small study classes
- Renting bicycles
- Carpentry and masonry work
- Plaiting hair
- Retailing goods (e.g. soft drinks, enamelware)
- Telephone services.

Where most of the entrepreneurial activities benefit mostly the entrepreneur, telephone services benefit the refugees in order to maintain their social capital. By calling other, refugees stay up to date on information in their home country and they can look for opportunities to access money. Calling and the internet are very important for refugees to receive remittances. The mobile phone entrepreneurs enable other refugees to forge a livelihood.

AID AS RESOURCE

A frequently pursued livelihood strategy is making the policy of NGOs work in the interest of the refugee by manipulation to such an extent that it is labeled by some academics as cheating (e.g. Kibreab, 2004) and by other academics as “digging aid” (Jansen, 2011). Where cheating is seen as a fraudulent activity, “digging aid” is a concept where refugees try to make the best out of a situation and perceive aid as a resource instead of a handout alone. There are many ways for refugees to manipulate humanitarian assistance.

One way for manipulating the humanitarian aid system is to walk outside the refugee camp and return the next day pretending to be a newly arrived refugee (Kibreab, 2004). Each new refugee receives a parcel with necessities such as blankets and a ration card. When the refugees sign up for the second time they can sell the goods that they already have gotten the previous time. Also the multiple ration cards gives right to more food which can also be sold. A different way to manipulate is to inflate the number of household members. “Many refugee families exaggerated their household sizes and collected more rations than they would have been entitled to” (Kibreab, 2004: 4). “It was also common for refugees to register in more than one camp and to hold two or more entitlement cards enabling them to collect double, triple or even more rations” (Kibreab, 2004: 4). Inflating the size of families is done by borrowing children from neighbours and relatives. Larger families receive more assistance and rations than smaller families (Kibreab, 2004).

A different way of manipulating the system is not getting more assistance based on the number of ration cards, but by pretending to be vulnerable. Aid is often targeted at those identified as very vulnerable (Werker, 2007). Refugees know this and use this fact in their own advantage. When provision is based on vulnerability then they will present themselves as vulnerable and in need of extra assistance (Bakewell, 2003). There are multiple ways to pretend to be vulnerable, refugees only need to know when someone is classified as being vulnerable. Aid is often targeted at people who are alone. Registering as a single independent household make refugees look vulnerable which will lead to more assistance (Kibreab, 2004). “If a husband, a wife and their adult son each registered independently, they would receive double or triple the amount of whatever assistance was due to returning families” (Kibreab, 2004: 10). Sometimes extra aid is targeted at specific ethnicities. It is not for everyone

possible to fake a background, but when the aid provider is a foreigner they are easier to be fooled (Bakewell, 2003). “Refugees, have to constantly negotiate the categories of “deserving” and “undeserving” in the judgment of the charity givers” (OKA, 2014: 26).

These previous examples of manipulation are seen by some academics, the NGOs and UNHCR as fraudulent. From a refugees’ perspective it is a way to improve their livelihood. It is for them a strategy that will improve their lives and give them more opportunities for forging a livelihood. Humanitarian aid becomes a component of the refugees’ resource base, which they use to further their interests. Aid is not only a form of assistance, a necessity or hand-out alone, it is for most refugees an extra resource that helps to shape a livelihood (Jansen, 2011).

As stated before, in many cases aid is targeted at the most vulnerable people. Refugees can make this fact work for them by acting as a vulnerable person. It is not difficult for refugees to appear vulnerable, particularly when aid givers are foreigners who are not able to differentiate between vulnerable and not so vulnerable refugees (Bakewell, 2003). Refugees “have to appear dependent to receive resources, but this does not mean they have forgotten how to survive by themselves” (Bakewell, 2003: 11). When aid is targeted refugees find ways to fit in the targeted group, they try to receive what they can. In these cases some refugees pretend to be more dependent on aid than they actually are. Handouts and other forms of aid can be monetized by refugees, by selling it to other refugees or locals. Even though it is prohibited to sell their handouts, refugees will even sell them in front of the distribution centre and no one will stop them (Jansen, 2011). Monetizing aid can become a threat to the local economy. It may distort the local markets for grains and tools (Werker, 2007). But it can also become an opportunity for locals to buy cheap food and other handouts from the refugees. Digging aid is a quick way in the interest of the refugees to earn some money to buy things that they really need or want.

THE CAMP AS OPPORTUNITY FOR OUTSIDERS

Because of the fact that refugee camps are placed in remote areas, there is often no good infrastructure or economic activity present at first. But because aid has to be brought to the camp, roads are been build. This leads to the fact that camps become physically connected with surrounding villages. Local people can make the fact that there is a refugee camp situated nearby work to their advantage.

Locals try to find jobs inside the camps which cannot or will not be fulfilled by refugees. Job opportunities are for example: working as a logistic officer, interpreter, porter, truck driver, manager of relief programmes (Kibreab, 2004: 4). There are also jobs available as storekeeper, taxi driver, working in hotels, clubs or restaurants etcetera (ibid).

Locals are not only interested in job opportunities. There are entrepreneurs that try to find opportunities to make their businesses thrive. They enter the refugee camp looking for investment, cheap labour, and business opportunities (Jacobsen, 2005: 34)

Not only do locals seek for jobs or ways to improve their businesses, they also try to make advantage of the aid system. They try to bribe camp officials to become registered as refugee (Kibreab, 2004). Also they pretend to be refugees in order to receive ration cards (Werker, 2007). As well as the refugees themselves, locals try to cheat the humanitarian system.

For economical reasons it is important that there is a good understanding between the locals and refugees. If there is more interaction there is more willingness to cooperate. Without tension between the groups, people are more willing to hire people from the opposite group. If there are problems than they are often ways to improve the relationship. For example refugees should not be better off than the local community. Problems with local communities occur less when refugees are not in competition with local populations for jobs and resources (Porter, 2008). Also they need the opportunity to interact. Without proper understanding there is friction. “Many seemed unable or unwilling to build the social networks to the host population that might allow them to access regular employment”(Porter, 2008: 249).

NEGATIVE INFLUENCES ON THE CAMP ECONOMY

There are a lot of people dependent on the economy of a refugee camp. Refugees become entrepreneurs with their own businesses. They find jobs in and outside the camp. There are people who manipulate and cheat the system. Both refugees and locals use aid as a resource. And traders and middlemen buy and sell stuff on the camp markets. Settlement economies tend to be rich and varied (Werker, 2007). But there are a lot of mechanisms that make the camp economy not flourish as it could be. camps are located in places far away from big markets and capitals. With a distance of over 80 kilometers from the camp to the capital transportation costs and information costs are very high (Werker, 2007: 467). Refugees have to rely on the internal markets of the camps and other small markets in nearby villages. When trades from the big city arrive at the camp to buy produce, refugees get a lower price, because they are limited in their trading options. Information costs, are costs that are dependent on the lack of information. Without information refugees don't know what kind of price they can ask for their stuff. Also they don't know about new job opportunities (Werker, 2007). Even though this is true, with the wide spread availability of internet and mobile phones, the information costs are not as high as they used to be.

With the camp economy primarily relying on the refugees as economic actors, it is them who should be supported by developing their economic livelihood strategies. An enabling environment, or at least one without strict policies, may lead to new sources of energy and creativity for refugees to enter the camp economy (Kibreab, 2004). “Protracted refugee camp situations have a positive impact on regional economies” (Jansen, 2011: 162). Refugees contribute to their host countries by taking part in the economy. It is for them important not only to rely on handouts or other forms of aid. They try to become self-sufficient and are willing to take risks.

CONCLUSION

There are a lot of livelihood strategies that refugees undertake. Most of these strategies are based on the informal sector and are often not recognized as economic activity by humanitarian agencies.

To improve their livelihoods, refugees will use their handouts as resource to access other commodities. They will try to manipulate the humanitarian aid regime in such a way that they receive more handouts than what they are actually entitled to. By some academics this is explained as being a fraud, but it can also be seen as an inventive way to negotiate their refugee status.

Because of the large amounts of money that are pumped into refugee camps, via remittances and handouts, refugee camps become very attractive for people from outside the camp. It becomes an economic opportunity for people who are not refugees.

A refugee camp can become an economic place and it will become one, but because of restrictions and other influences such as being placed in a remote area it will not flourish as it probably would have without restrictions and in an economical better place.

CHAPTER FIVE: CONCLUSION

With this thesis I have tried to give some insight on how refugees in protracted situations try to shape their livelihoods. In the first chapter I gave a short overview on the status of refugees. How many people have fled their country and why they got stuck in a protracted situation. In the second chapter I have tried to shed some light on how humanitarian assistance is provided. I have done this by first analyzing the role the UNHCR, NGOs and host government in the aid providing process. This was followed by perceptions from the aid givers on the aid receivers. The discourses that are used to frame refugees have been explained by looking at the agenda of the NGOs, governments and academics. The way they frame refugees is based on the goals they want to achieve. Refugees are in the eyes of the humanitarians dependent on aid and a burden for the local community. These discourses are not only confusing to understand the lives of refugees it also gives false information. By framing refugees as helpless victims, without an opportunity to escape the situation people are lured into thinking that the refugee aid regime is only based on temporary emergency aid where minimal needs are met. It is true that it is the main objective of the NGOs and UNHCR but that doesn't mean it is a hundred percent true. The UNHCR tries to improve the lives of refugees via self-reliance programmes. Academics with an activist background should describe the real situation from a scientific point of view and not from a view that tries to alter the refugee regime.

In chapter three I have tried to give an insight on how networks are created and maintained. With the theory of Collins on Interaction Rituals I have tried to explain how via certain steps social relations are created and maintained. I am aware of the fact that not all relations can be explained by this theory and that Interaction Rituals in different settings will have different outcomes. But this theory can explain why refugees with different background and ethnicities can create new networks which will lead to new opportunities and ways to forge a livelihood. Being connected with the world outside the refugee camp is not only beneficiary for the refugees themselves, it is for local communities an opportunity to enter a new market and expand their customers. It is also a way to find cheap labour and products.

The importance of remittances is that new money will flow into the refugee camp. This money will be used for commodities inside and outside the camp. It brings economic development to the surrounding economies. It will attract people who want to invest in business opportunities.

In chapter four I pictured the refugee camp as economic place with a specific camp economy. Refugees have different livelihood strategies which are mainly based on informal economic activity. Some refugees find the opportunity to become an entrepreneur. They need money to start their businesses. This money comes from their jobs, remittances or selling their handouts. Refugees are inventive in finding market opportunities. When there is a demand for certain products or services refugees will start businesses to fill the market gap.

Some refugees use their handouts as resource. Some academics frame these refugees as frauds. I think it is a livelihood strategy that makes refugees become inventive in circumventing rules and negotiate their status as refugee.

The refugee camp is and can be an opportunity for outsiders, local communities and traders living further away. This contradicts the notion of refugees as burden, framed by local policy makers. It is true that refugees can become a serious security threat, or put a strain on local resources but for many people refugees are an opportunity for cheap labour and refugee camps as places to access health and education services.

Refugee camp economies are often not the economies that they could be, with more trade and welfare. Restrictive policy makes it for refugees hard to exit the camp to find jobs and for outsiders to enter the camp for trade. In the interest of the refugee and outsiders, by loosen up the restrictions on movement and work, refugee camps can become prosperous places in previously desolated areas.

I think it is important to alter the current refugee discourses, they are partially based on facts that are highlighted by the ones who use these discourses. These discourses need some nuance. Yes there is some truth in them, but they simplify the reality. Also it can twist reality and become untrue. Reducing refugees as helpless without agency, dependent on aid and without any form of humanity pushes them in a new category of people, that of not being a person.

A refugee camp is an economic place where refugee try to reduce risks and improve their livelihoods. Maybe it is true they live in poverty and are marginalized. But they never stop being humans with agency. By framing a refugee camp as an economic and social place it gives refugees their humanity back. Being a refugee doesn't make them aid dependent victims. The current refugee discourse is lacking the emphasize on refugees as human beings. As stated in de first two chapter, being a refugee is a legal status it doesn't change them on a human level. Indeed they need to adapt to their new situation but in a protracted situation living in a refugee camp becomes the normal situation .

Because aid is financed by donations, donors have to feel the need to contribute money to a good cause. This is probably also the reason why mainstream refugee discourse focusses on the needy helpless victim. I think it is in the interest of the donors to give an accurate description of the refugee situation. Donors should donate because they want to help refugees in improve their lives and not because they feel obliged to help out of pity.

Based on my findings I argue that the image of a refugee as helpless victim is outdated. A refugee camp is not a secluded site. Refugees are not "warehoused". Refugee camps are social places where interaction between various persons take place. When a refugee situation becomes protracted a refugee camp becomes an economic place with a specific camp economy based on aid, trade and social networks.

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