Boundaries of Civility Transgressed? Studying Practices of Humanitarian Government, Difference, and Power in Kakuma Refugee Camp

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This article draws on ethnographic observations of structures of refugee governance in Kenya's Kakuma Refugee Camp. It revisits the continued relevance and functionality of the concept of governmentality in the analysis of forms of authority and power dynamics in settings of humanitarian and camp government. By means of a case study analysis, the article aims to demonstrate how, in the socio-politically remote and geographically isolated setting of Kakuma, locally enacted practices of refugee governance cause tension and relationships characterised by a simmering animosity between agency staff and camp residents. It is argued that the camp's day-to-day governance structures bear a compelling resemblance to the pseudoscientific, essentialist, stereotypical bodies of imagery that informed and directed previous colonial relationships of domination. In doing so, the article aims to contribute to the ongoing exploration of historically constituted connections between the project of colonialism and that of contemporary humanitarianism in the context of refugee assistance.

INTRODUCTION

At the Kakuma Refugee Camp, just above the entrance of the camp-managers' offices at the compound of the regional Department of Refugee Affairs (DRA), a signboard reads, 'Kakuma Camp. Office of the Vice President. Ministry of State for Immigration & Registration. Department of Refugee Affairs.' Displayed at the centre of the board, surrounded by text, one can identify Kenya's familiar national Coat of Arms: an image of two lions holding two crossed spears and shield with a white cockerel in the middle. The shield has colours similar to those of the Kenyan national flag. The unified parts of this image are historically understood to signify protection, unity, and – the defence of – freedom. Underneath the picture is written: *'Refugees are real people'* [quotation marks in original, italics added] (Al Jazeera 2013).[1] This phrase, which is, indeed, a quotation, is easy to miss upon first glance. It is displayed in a smaller font than the remaining text and situated at the bottom of the board. What does it mean; 'refugees are real people'? If the phrase is a quotation, whose is it? Why was it considered to be important enough to be re-cited here, at this particular spot?

In most first formal encounters, the compound of the camp manager – constituting the official representative of the Government of Kenya (GoK) in Kakuma's administration – is logically the first place visitors will be introduced to when arriving in the town of Kakuma. Before entering the physical camp itself, this phrase is one of the first things the – observant – visitor may read. Newly arriving asylum seekers may, in some cases, also report or be delivered here, in anticipation of registration. I had seldom seen a phrase like this, referring to the basic fact of humanity, the essential 'realness' of refugees, and thought it compelling.

In the field of refugee assistance and advocacy, one is used to seeing banners and posters with slogans referring to human rights and rights-based approaches in the corridors and offices of respective agencies. However, most of these messages directly or indirectly point to the importance of specific rights or related concerns, such as education, health, sex and gender based violence. If the camp administration considered this phrase important enough to

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[1] For a moving image of this signboard, see the video at 01:05 minutes. [Last accessed on 25 November 2014].

be quoted, did that mean the – to me self-evident information conveyed by it – was not equally self-evident to others? If refugees' 'real peoplehood' needed to be emphasised in such a form, upon entering a refugee camp, what did that mean? If one would assume the message, this classification of real peoplehood, indicates a lack of consensus on the matter, what is the alternative? Less peoplehood, non-peoplehood?

During my fieldwork in Kakuma, these and other questions concerning representational objects and practices, encounters and dialogues, text- and non-text based, came to be a central focus of inquiry. This article examines questions related to mechanisms of governmentality, the regulatory mechanisms and official discourses through which subjects are governed, and practices of representation in the camp and in the area of refugee protection. It is an effort to contribute to the ongoing exploration of historically constituted connections between colonial structures of control, on the one hand, and the contemporary political economy of humanitarianism and 'Aidland's' social life-worlds, on the other (Mosse 2013).

The multiplicity of ways in which international refugee assistance policies are translated into everyday practice by regional representatives and staff of UNHCR and implementing partners varies greatly on the local level. These local 'cultures' may readily elude the sustained attention of external observers and monitoring bodies, as these are commonly intent on observing grave and visible rights violations. However, the ethnographic study of refugee spaces' daily workings can nuance our understanding about complex forms of sociopolitical organisation, their distinct, on-the-ground variations, and related and continuous processes of future imagination and present negotiation, as expressed and enacted by *all* actors, including refugees (see also Sigona 2014). I believe such scholarship to be of relevance in the case of refugee camps, which are often located close to porous state borders and in climatologically challenging areas. Scholarly attention has been paid to the fact that camps, due to their relative isolation, are prone to a multitude of security problems and arbitrary conduct (e.g., Crisp 2000; Verdirame 2011). However, such humanitarian spaces have been, at times, subject to rather uniform, depoliticised media portrayals which tend to foreground news of climatological, environmental, and seasonal challenges to refugee livelihoods and health. In Kenya, reports on the consequences of droughts or floods, rather than, for example, events of sociopolitical association, membership, and conflict, contribute to a singular representation of camps that, in turn, runs the risk of perpetuating the dominant equation of refugees with apolitical beings, and the camp as a site providing shelter to 'bare life' in the Agamben-esque understanding.

Alternatively, a body of literature has emerged that appears to celebrate contemporary refugee camps as progressive places of (educational) opportunity and development, in which urban features can be discerned and alternative economies are thriving. Although efforts that positively approach encampment and promote refugees' resilience should be appreciated, they cannot easily be reconciled with constricting realities of denied rights to refugee employment, movement and other forms of participation and association in host societies. Such representations tend to overlook, for instance, power-abusing practices by state actors. To illustrate this, during my fieldwork in Kakuma refugees reported that Kenyan police officers demand unofficial 'taxes' from refugee owners of informal businesses, confusing their role to enforce stability in the camp with that of tax-collectors. Moreover, the representation of the camp as a city – albeit without citizenship rights bearing inhabitants – effectively conceals the failure of encampment as a temporary, and not a durable solution to forced migration crises. Recently, the discussion surrounding camp legitimacy has seen recurred attention on both scholarly and public platforms (e.g., Hovil 2014; Kagan 2013; Pobjoy & Verdirame 2013). A noteworthy highlight in this regard is the newly released and UNHCR approved 'Policy on Alternatives to Camps' (2014), which provides a long awaited

addition and response to UNHCR's 2009 'Policy on Refugee Protection and Solutions in Urban Areas'.

The purpose of this article is to demonstrate how, in the case of Kakuma, a camp which has been in place for over two decades, locally enacted practices, and expressions of refugee protection and camp governance can lead to tension and relationships characterised by a simmering animosity between nongovernmental agency staff, state actors, and refugees. Based on ethnographic observation and subsequent analysis, I argue that particular manifestations of tension bear a compelling resemblance to the pseudoscientific, reductionist, stereotypical rhetoric and bodies of imagery which informed and directed relationships of domination between 'native' populations and colonial administrators in 19th and 20th century African colonial territories (Berman 1990, Cooper 1996, Mangan 2012, Spurr 1993).

The article will be structured as follows: first I will provide a brief contextualisation of Kakuma as a fieldwork setting, wherein access restrictions and barriers are put up by different actors comprising the refugee regime. As the negotiation of access to regulated refugee spaces and programming activities influences processes and outcomes of ethnographic knowledge production in profound ways, I consider it an epistemological obligation to deconstruct and reflect on access limitations experienced. This will be followed by a theoretical framework in which I make an effort to revisit the continued relevance and functionality of the concept of governmentality in the analysis of forms of authority and power dynamics in settings of humanitarian and camp government. I then introduce the case study central to subsequent analysis; an event which was announced as a legal awareness training in Kenyan law, intended for refugee incentive workers and facilitated by Kenyan UNHCR employed lawyers. The remainder of the article will be dedicated to a deconstructive discourse analysis of this event, and employs the post-structural approach of governmentality, as well as a set of notions derived from postcolonial theory and cultural studies to do so. I will suggest that, to understand on a more comprehensive level the day-to-day realities of camp governance and its associated representational practices, opaque forms of authority division need to be interrogated in a wider context of historically formed relationships of colonial domination and rule. Ethnographic research can be of value in illuminating persistent remnants of colonial structures of domination by identifying and dissecting the more subtle and concealed, that is, less obvious and visible, mechanisms of control and governance.

CONTEXT - Putting into perspective the refugee camp as a field of ethnographic inquiry

The ethnographic research on which this article is built took place between January and June 2012. The bulk of this time was spent in Kakuma, with little interruptions, and extended data-collection in Cairo, Nairobi, and Addis Ababa. During this fieldwork period, I concentrated observation efforts on identifying modes of governmentality in the camp, that is, the ways in which an inconclusive spectrum of regulatory mechanisms and supporting official discourses pertaining to, for example, camp security, basic needs, or environmental hazards, translated into encounters between local representatives of Kakuma's refugee regime, and refugees residing in the camp. However, when speaking of 'encounters', I do not merely refer to verbal, face-to-face interaction. I also include that kind of interaction belonging to a more subtle, inconspicuous non-verbal domain, where messages can be conveyed both symbolically and metaphorically and where meaning is constructed – and fixed – both 'dialogically' and 'intertextually' (Hall 1997a: 233, 235). Here, one of the parties, most often 'the humanitarian actor', may be physically absent or otherwise inaccessible to 'the refugee',

and his or her contribution to the dialogue and the production of meaning may be substituted by material objects signifying physical distance and spatial segregation, in the form of barbed-wire fences, guarded gates, or sign- and notification boards. The voices of UNHCR and NGO staff may be effectively mediated by these objects and other instructed voices, belonging to security guards hired to protect their workplaces or living quarters.

The distinction between verbal and non-verbal encounters, and between official/formal and unofficial/informal interaction and spaces, has defined the experience and possibility of doing ethnographic research in this setting to a great extent. Over the course of this research project I learnt that being present in a refugee camp as a researcher for an extended period of time was considered odd and perhaps unsettling both by refugees and humanitarian actors. When not in the capacity of either UNHCR or NGO staff, an 'extended period of time' – as opposed to brief, officially scheduled visits expected from journalists, donor representatives and occasionally invited consultants – seemed to mean anything more than a few days. Indeed, the fact that camps are invariably securitised spaces means 'access to them is supervised' and researchers' activities restricted, if not regulated entirely (Agier 2011: 53, see also Harrell-Bond & Verdirame 2005; Hyndman 2000; Verdirame 1999). Independent researchers are subjected to a form of control and surveillance that is different, albeit not unlike, that exercised on refugees in that same space. In other words, modes of governmentality work on everyone, in more or less subtle ways. I contend that investigative efforts concentrating on other issues in camps whilst remaining unaware of or otherwise disregarding governmentality's workings on the researcher and the research being conducted would run a serious risk of flawed findings and biased interpretations of the information yielded. 'Doing' ethnography in Kakuma, for me, continuously meant asking myself why I spoke with whom and how and by whom that particular communication had been established.

CONCEPTUALISATION – Governmentality & Humanitarian Government

Governmentality, within Foucauldian scholarship, is often quite neutrally understood as a range of practices which take the conduct of people as object of scrutiny (Bröckling et al. 2011, Fassin 2011a, Mitchell 1990). In an essay written just after his lectures at the Collège de France of 1978-79, wherein he first used the term *gouvernementalité*, Foucault nuanced his preoccupation with 'the question of power' by stating he was not so much concerned with power as with the ways in which human beings are made subjects by the power relationships they are immersed in (1982: 778). The novelty of this emphasis on the production of 'the subject' at the time, was the recognition of the relational workings of power, as operating in a complex domain of 'relations of force, strategic developments and tactics' (Hall 1997b: 43). Didier Fassin speaks of governmentality as the myriad of 'institutions, procedures, actions, and reflections that have populations as object' (2011a: 214). Contrary to the closely related concept of biopolitics – strictly speaking a 'politics of life', of biological existence and sociopolitical living, of *zoë* and *bios* – Fassin argues governmentality not to be about forms of life, but only about the political economy regulating populations, and producing 'human collectivities' (2011b: 186).

The concept of governmentality emerged as an analytical instrument – not as a theory – to be put to use in efforts to understand that complex domain where the relational exercise of power directs, regulates, and modifies the conduct of both governing actors and governed populations. Foucault speaks in this respect about the ways in which certain actions modify others. He writes: 'It [the exercise of power] is a total structure of actions brought to bear upon possible actions; it incites, it induces, it seduces, it makes easier or more difficult; in the extreme it constrains or forbids absolutely; it is nevertheless always a way of acting upon an

acting subject.... A set of actions upon other actions' (Foucault 1982: 789). This sounds rather oblique and inarticulate, as if every human activity can, and should in fact be interpreted within the realm of a governing regime's authority, reach, and effects. Foucault has directed his attention mainly to the discontinuities between technologies within the spheres of law, discipline and security techniques, created by the state and executed by state-directed institutions like the police (Bröckling et. al. 2011: 4). However, it should be noted that it is likely that he indeed meant *all* action within predetermined parameters as defined by a regime, which leaves room for a certain degree of personal autonomy and choice; not just action that *coerces* individuals and groups into certain behaviour. As Tanya Li has eloquently summarised, the practice of governing populations then entails: 'setting conditions so that people will be inclined to behave as they should … yet not attempting to dictate actions or coerce the population' (Li 2005: 387).

In settings of humanitarian government, similar regulatory conditions and boundaries are set by a more diverse set of governing actors, complicating structures of authority and control. When we employ governmentality as an analytical tool in the study of humanitarian government, we ought to take into account the context-dependent composition of such regimes, which usually include the presence of both state and non-state actors. In most definitions however, emphasis is placed on underlying ethical, legitimising principles. Humanitarian government is defined as 'the administration of human collectivities in the name of a higher moral principle that sees the preservation of life and the alleviation of suffering as the highest moral value of action' (Fassin 2007: 151; 2011b: 194). Verdirame, problematising how humanitarianism 'escapes easy definitions', asserts an overall consensus of it being a normative 'set of ethical principles' employed to 'alleviate suffering' (2011: 36-37). Such definitions do not do much to clarify the role of different governing actors in situations of humanitarian assistance, and moreover, fail to address the complexity and shifting markers of state sovereignty, due to the blurring of boundaries between state and non-state administrative forms. Indeed, the binary opposition between what belongs to the realm of the governmental and nongovernmental is not that self-evident (Fassin 2007: 50-51) nor easily dissectible in humanitarian regimes – or, by extension, in refugee camp spaces.

Kakuma's day-to-day administration is still, for a large part, in the hands of UNHCR. UNHCR continues to conduct Refugee Status Determination (RSD) procedures, despite reforms and the now greater involvement of the Government of Kenya (GoK) in other domains of governance, predominantly in the areas of security, dispute settlement, and crime prosecution. Whilst recognising considerable efforts made in the last fifteen years, it can still be argued that the camp exhibits extraterritorial characteristics, in which administrative sovereignty is, at best, arbitrarily shared between UNHCR and GoK. This results in an omnipresent and perpetual confusion amongst all actors concerning the boundaries and scope of responsibility (Griek I. 2007; Pobjoy & Verdirame 2013; Verdirame 1999). In Kakuma, a space of humanitarian government, boundaries are thus blurred between what is governmental and nongovernmental action. According to Fassin, this is further complicated by humanitarianism's underlying 'moral logic' – the alleviation of suffering – which is claimed as the rationale driving both state and non-state actors to intervening in humanitarian crises (2007: 50-51). Since humanitarian government is grounded in this form of (moral) reason, humanitarian settings have long been represented as depoliticised. Like Verdirame (1999; 2011), Fassin does not question the political character of humanitarian spaces. This is important, perhaps especially so for non-statist research like much anthropological refugee related research, for non-state – e.g., humanitarian – parties are increasingly recognised as *de facto* governing actors, and in some instances entirely take over states' responsibilities concerning refugee protection. Here, too, we ought to remember the significance of the

'range of possibilities' Foucault refers to when he, over and over, reiterates this notion of 'an action upon an action', through which 'a whole field of responses, reactions, results, and possible inventions may open up' (Foucault 1982: 789). I find this significant, firstly, because it does not perpetuate the agency/passivity dualism that all too often resurfaces in forced migration studies discourse. It also acknowledges the possibility of resistance against structures of power by forcibly displaced groups and individuals inhabiting regulated (camp) spaces, such as Kakuma. Secondly, and more importantly, I argue that the richness of Foucault's thinking about the subject and power when it comes to studying modes of government in these 'other spaces' like refugee camps (Foucault & Miskowiec 1986), redirects the researcher's attention to that type of action, that type of behaviour, which may not be so very visible, and typically takes place in the 'interstices of the state, International Organisations (IOs) and Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs)' (Elyachar 2003:598; Li 2005). It is in these 'interstices', in these intermediate – that is, informal – spaces, that the ethnographic researcher is likely to move around, perhaps by choice, perhaps by default. Whether because of the former, or as a result of the limited access to official spaces, the unique strength of ethnography may very well be to make use of this hybrid position to study precisely the invisible domain of activity where subtle struggles take place and where seemingly fixed power relations are contested. Not in overt protest and resistance by the 'underprivileged', but by responding to the unplanned byproducts of policies, that is, the governing parties' actions (Elyachar 2003; Tsing 2000).

To illustrate this rather abstract description of ethnography's function, I will elaborate briefly on the consequences of my hybrid position in Kakuma. By conducting research independently – that is, by not being a (staff) member of UNHCR or any of its implementing agencies, and by not being invited to conduct research on a consultancy basis – my access was limited and sometimes subjected to a rather arbitrary logic. Whereas I was warmly received in the camp's reception centre and new arrivals area, for example, on some occasions I was denied access to refugee field posts, and at other times invited. Several fieldposts, three at the time of my research, have been constructed in different parts of the camp. Here, asylum seekers and refugees can make inquiries concerning the status of their RSD process (commonly referred to as 'refugee mandate') or resettlement profile. However, visiting hours are organised according to a rather non-efficient, bureaucratic system of appointment slots, and backlogs are common. As a result, the guarded, busy waiting areas have functioned as a central fieldwork site. Officially the field posts are meant to facilitate easier access and communication between refugees and UNHCR officials. However, refugee participants reported the field posts to be understaffed, and suspected UNHCR to have built them deep into the camp not to facilitate easier access, but to keep dissatisfied refugees from sprawling its compound, and away from the public eye.

On another level, I did not manage to formally arrange interviews with UNHCR officials through official channels, whilst being invited to its compound on an informal basis. I could be both offered and denied lifts by NGO vehicles around the camp. Despite having been granted official permission by the Kenya Department of Refugee Affairs (DRA) and having been welcomed by the Kakuma camp manager upon arrival, my presence regularly seemed to evoke suspicion and rumour amongst agency staff.

In the next section I will proceed to the introduction of the selected event and subsequent unit of analysis: a training facilitated by Kenyan, UNHCR-employed lawyers, officially held for the purpose of deepening incentive psychosocial staff's knowledge about Kenyan law.

SPECTACLES OF DIFFERENCE – Competing discourses in interaction/confrontation

During the first half of my stay in Kakuma I attended what was announced as a 'legal awareness training', facilitated by three UNHCR lawyers. The announced purpose of the training was to update incentive psychosocial staff on Kenyan law in several domains. Sexual offences and general 'civil' dispute cases were noted as separate main themes to be discussed during this afternoon. Although incentive staff members – refugees employed by one of the agencies, receiving a small payment in return – are hired in all kinds of positions, it was explained to me that the training targeted psychosocial workers because of their 'intense immersion in refugee communities'. The following observations were taken from my field notes, partly jotted down on the spot, compiled into a more coherent entry later that day:

'I had looked forward to it [attending the training], as I had hoped it to be a gathering and exchange on the basis of equality between UNHCR and NGO employees, as colleagues....It turned out differently. The [relatively young] lawyers facilitating the training were Kenyan nationals. They informally told me they had just started working for UNHCR. From the beginning of the training – I sat amongst the psychosocial caseworkers in the audience; the trainers stood at the other end of the room, in a classroom type of setting – the atmosphere is tense. The caseworkers whisper amongst each other, the trainers do not seem comfortable talking before this group; they have trouble capturing the attention of the attendees. When addressing the topic of sexual offence, the Congolese and Somali refugee communities are specifically named as prone to rape 'their women'. Not at any point during the training is the occurrence of rape being contextualised as having been employed as a strategy of war in certain conflicts. One lawyer says: 'In Kenya, we will not accept you, Somali and Congolese communities, just to continue solving matters as rape amongst yourselves. In Kenya, rape is a criminal act for which you will be arrested.' Whispering can be heard in the audience. Simultaneously [also referring to rape], a lawyer states: 'I know that now, within Kakuma camp, women are often exaggerating things.' I assume she means to indicate previous situations in which refugee women reported rape, but where later was discovered they had fabricated the story in the hope of being found eligible for resettlement due to being 'at risk'. The lawyer however, does not elaborate on her statement. Many of the lawyers' following statements start with: 'In our civilised country of Kenya, we have laws that…and we expect you all to abide by these laws, and to let go of the customary habits that you might be used to within your homelands, because you should know that here you will be imprisoned for life for acts that you might just get away with in these places where you come from'. Sudanese participants in the training are addressed personally when the topic of child abduction comes up, and Somalis are spoken of as if they would all circumcise their girls, deny their children primary education and perceive religious 'madrassas' as a substitute. The atmosphere grows tense. There is one highlight in discussing the role of police officers, when some caseworkers raise the issue of bribery and open drunkenness of officers and their misbehaviour towards refugee girls, saying that Kenyan police officers do as they please and act as if they are above the law, whereupon one lawyer simply states that it would be refugees' own mistake if they would pay bribes, because after all is it not their own responsibility to know their rights and behave accordingly?

The general atmosphere within the meeting, and the tone of speech by which the lawyers address attendees is a condescending one, which leads me to wonder whether it is a training meant for caseworkers or for refugees. What is the intended audience here? The

refugee population as a whole or people in the capacity of being NGO staff members as well as colleagues within the Kakuma refugee regime? When talking about 'rights' and 'laws', there seems to be an opposition between the attendees – who are indeed, as incentive staff, both employees and refugees – and UNHCR lawyers conducting the training, supposed to explain Kenyan law. There seems to have arisen a confusion between what is, in fact, the law of the Kenyan nation state and that what is perceived as moral, normative, or cultural behaviour. International humanitarian law or international conventions related to refugees are not mentioned. The laws of Kenya are presented as civilised laws that are, by extension, communicated as different and superior to laws to which refugees, according to the lawyers, would be accustomed. Following this reasoning, Kenyan representatives of the law are thus expected to teach refugees on their rights and obligations in its territories.'

I selected this particular event for analysis because it was one of the first I witnessed in which reductionist, stereotypical remarks about refugees and their respective nationalities were openly, publicly expressed in a professional context.The event, instead of a training in which particular components of Kenyan law were given special attention, and psychosocial caseworkers were provided with the tools to integrate certain legal principles in their work, can be interpreted as an attempt to regulate a population's behaviour within the purview of Kenyan law and state interest. It was a confusing event for all actors, mostly so because both parties seemed inclined to alternate, or were forced to alternate, between roles, statuses, and loyalties. The lawyers appeared caught between state and non-state positions, and their presentation offers a typical example of how boundaries are blurred between state and non-state actors and roles in humanitarian government. Although a motivation to reassert Kenyan judicial authority and national sovereignty appeared to direct their behaviour and attitude, the lawyers worked for UNHCR, a non-state governing actor, and were supposed to officially represent UNHCR on this occasion. However, it seemed it was their national identity as Kenyans, as well as their occupational status as upholders of Kenyan law, that inspired their conduct during the training. The lawyers spoke from a prejudiced position about refugees, and engaged in an active process of othering; reducing caseworkers to refugees, and refugees to uncivilised, violent strangers on Kenyan sovereign territory. In response, the caseworkers were compelled to shift from their professional roles to their status as refugees, and a governed population in a humanitarian setting. The analytical focus on human conduct and relational workings of power in governmentality, alongside an overall Foucauldian perspective that foregrounds the formation of discursive subject positioning, proves instrumental in the effort to interpret and signify this event. To further analyse the role reversion and interpersonal antagonistic tension that emerged as a result, I suggest it is useful to deconstruct the event by means of placing it in a wider (post)colonial context of historical domination.

Randy Lippert returns to the early postcolonial period and the rise of nationalism in newly independent African states when arguing that humanitarian intervention in the context of refugee crises was framed as non-political, yet founded on colonial preconceptions of 'moral deficiency':

Since decolonization, Western authorities have assumed that these new nations (along with their rulers and citizens) are morally deficient. … Postcolonial African nations and their populations have been assumed to require aid and development of one kind or other to be brought into line with the requirements of liberal nationhood, ways of ruling, and conduct. Refugeeness allowed Western "non-political" intervention through the UNHCR and NGOs in these regions where "political" interference would have been impossible, first through emergency refugee aid, and then [through] additional programs of refugee

development. Refugeeness became a tactic in which such intervention was both made possible and justified. Since something or someone forced refugees in these sociopolitical spaces to flee, it could be assumed that "something or someone'' was morally lacking and needed enhancement through specialized intervention (1999: 305-306).

During the 'law training', ample suggestive reference was made to the supposed decency and degree of civilisation of refugee communities and their respective countries of origin. The compelling frequency of the word 'civilised', being uttered by the lawyers during their talk forced me to remember its previous politicised connotation in British colonialism. Indeed, as Lippert (1999) postulates, its ideological heritage and accompanying discourses penetrated into later hegemonic projects of developmentalism and humanitarianism (see also Barnett & Weiss 2008; Chimni 2009; Macrae 1998). Although the critique of humanitarianism as a mere continuation of imperial domination is not one I wish to reproduce, I do tend to agree with Verdirame when he notes that we need to be observant of 'the hegemonic side of humanitarianism', as 'humanitarians might become the unwitting executors of a hegemonic strategy' (2011: 37,49). Precisely because of the overall lack of extended external presence in, and the scrutiny of camp regimes, I would add to Verdirame's remark that this awareness becomes particularly important in the context of researching refugee regimes located in remote places; the very regions where refugee camps are (still) created and maintained.

My recorded observations led me to ask what function discrimination occupies within relationships of domination and the overall mechanisms of power structuring Kakuma. What could have been the reason for these lawyers to choose to continue reiterating this particular word – 'civilised' – to convey the validity of Kenyan law in the context of exceptionality that, to a certain extent characterises all humanitarian settings? What are the odds that, in contemporary Kenya, a nation-state burdened by a pervasive legacy of British colonial rule, Kenyan humanitarian staff come to grips with the collective memory of this colonial past by means of the continuous, albeit unofficial, assertion that the morally deficient 'something or someone' (Lippert 1999) is not, or no longer, them, but the refugees they are meant to assist?

In the training, there seemed to be confusion between *the law,* understood here as obligations and rights within Kenya and *perception* of what is perceived as moral, cultural or 'normal'. A clear effort was made to represent Kenya as a democratic state, following the rule of law; a 'civilised' country in which there is no place for rape or abuse, kidnapping, murder, or other types of crime 'that refugees might be used to as normal and allowed' in their respective countries of origin. What this event conveys is that the (a)historical invention of 'the refugee' as immoral, impure and uncivilised – as 'other' – is still prevalent. It is being reproduced in Kakuma, and as a result smears and, indeed, pollutes daily interaction between (local) humanitarian staff and refugees (Malkki 1995). What happened within this encounter was an active reproduction of stereotypes – if not racial, then along national, ethnic, moral lines – and difference being actively (re)asserted and perpetuated (Hall 1997a). It did not matter that the people called to attend the training were not 'just' refugees, but incentive NGO staff members who participated in a professional capacity. What is most interesting here is that one would expect there to be less of a hierarchy, less of a distance between training-givers and training-receivers, so to speak, because both groups were staff operating within, and representing, a single refugee regime. There is a certain similarity, a 'sameness' (Bhabha 1984, Mcleod 2000: 53). Compellingly, however, it seems that the lawyers felt they had to demonstrate their authority/superiority by establishing a difference, and reminding training participants of their ultimate refugee status.

The work of Homi Bhabha on mimicry, stereotypes, and ambivalence in colonial discourse provides valuable insights in the dynamics at work within contemporary encounters between

refugee incentive staff and the national refugee regime, embodied by – predominantly – Kenyan personnel in Kakuma. Mimicry first, points to a created resemblance and imitation as one side of its 'double movement'; it is about reducing the difference between those who govern and those who find themselves governed (Bhabha 1984: 127) In colonial discourse, these are 'the coloniser' and 'the colonised', and could be translated – however in a simplified, dualistic form – to 'the humanitarian' and 'the refugee', for analytical purposes. The governed are taught, trained, and educated according to hegemonic – Western – standards and bodies of knowledge, and as a result start to more and more resemble those who govern. In Kakuma, as in other refugee camps, refugee jobs are framed as serving as an 'incentive'. Conventionally, 'incentive' can mean motivation, encouragement, but also concession. Apart from being trained and thus adopting a humanitarian idiom, incentive staff begin to look similar to other – Kenyan and ex-pat – agency staff. They can be seen to wear T-shirts indicating the NGO that employs them, often accompanied by a key cord and a cap portraying the logo of the respective agency. Attire may grant (former) incentive staff highly desired privileges, such as access to the agencies' compounds and proximity to UNHCR officials. These are otherwise difficult, if not impossible, to attain for refugees. Elements that are not similar, but divergent and largely invisible, include locally enacted interpersonal attitudes and treatment, as well as remuneration. 'Incentive' for refugees in Kakuma means a salary ranging between 3000-4000 Ksh a month, which amounts to approximately 50 U.S. Dollars. The camp administration can justify this by claiming they adhere to Kenya's reservations to the 1951 Refugee Convention – refugees are not permitted employment in Kenya – but what it represents for refugees workers is discriminatory difference, and the impossibility to be valued in ways similar to national and local staff, regardless of professional experience.

Bhabha introduces the notion of 'ambivalence' to point out the polarity between sameness and difference, and the kind of 'double movement' this entails; those governed are continuously in motion, 'sliding between' the two polarities. He argues that stereotypes' primary function is to 'fixate' subjects, that is, the governed, but since this fixation can never be stable, and ambivalence could potentially culminate in the mockery of established authority and even in – petty – resistance against the status quo, authority needs to be continuously reasserted by the reiteration of 'repertoires' featuring stereotypical imagery (Bhabha 1984:130; Hall 1997a: 232). Particular stereotypes invoked in the event of the training implicitly sent an ideological, polarising message: refugees originate from chaotic countries where lawlessness reigns. Therefore 'they' [refugees] are not civilised, like 'us' [Kenyans].

In conclusion, it ought to be remarked that the 'humanitarian conscience'; the process of empathising with survivors who fled situations of protracted conflict and persecution, was absent from this training. Instead of the promotion of mutual understanding and fruitful collaboration, a divisive difference was reasserted by the lawyers' resorting to a distancing, denigrating language; an idiom strikingly similar to that of the previous colonial project's civilising mission. Moreover, what was equally absent from the training was a genuine rights-based approach to law (Verdirame 2011: 48, 51), as well as adequate references to legal principles in both human rights law and international refugee law. Whilst the 'real peoplehood' of refugees is affirmed on the signboard at the camp manager's compound, it is cause for concern that this same peoplehood is insufficiently acknowledged by some of those humanitarian professionals tasked with the day-to-day representation of the local camp regime.

CONCLUDING REMARKS

Theoretical and analytical instruments provided by governmentality, cultural analysis and postcolonial theory can prove insightful in understanding the daily workings of remote refugee regimes as being historically constituted. When studying camps ethnographically, paying attention to 'systems of representation' may assist researchers in interpreting struggles of power, whether latent or manifest, as the circulation of official and unofficial discourses and repertoires – speech and action, visual images, material objects – carry ideological, not always unambiguous messages. As demonstrated in the introduction of this article with the example of the signboard, we ought to ask ourselves: Who sees this? What may be the 'preferred message' here? What is the viewer supposed to think? What else does this object/text/image signify? (Hall 1997a: 228; 1997b) In the case of material objects, their undisputed physical presence does not ensure an evenly fixed, stable, singular meaning (Lidchi 1997:162). Meanings are ever-changing and disputable, yet by making the event of the training the focus of inquiry in this article I have attempted to demonstrate that discriminatory patterns within interaction in Kakuma, when understood as remnants of those ideological structures that previously legitimised colonial rule, may go a long way in explaining current governmental practices and struggles of contested authority in camps. Confronted with such historically defined relationships of domination, anthropologists continue to be faced with the responsibility to evaluate structures of colonialism not as past, but as the ongoing and 'unfinished business of struggle and negotiation' (Pels 1997:164; Cooper & Stoler 1989).

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