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YOUTH AND THE CAMP: A TIME AND PLACE OF WAITING

Young people’s perspectives of Dzaleka Refugee Camp, Malawi

Joshua Anderson-Rose

Thesis submitted for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy in International Development
University of Edinburgh, Scotland
August, 2022
Abstract

This thesis explores encampment through a lens of ‘youth in waiting’ in Dzaleka refugee camp, Malawi. Examining the thoughts and experiences of 40, Congolese, Burundian and Rwandan young people, aged 17 to 29, living in Dzaleka for various amounts of years, it seeks to expand current depictions of camps as places of ‘contradiction’, ‘indistinction’, and ‘ambiguity’. Grounded in ever-blurring refugee/citizen, camp/non-camp divides, these depictions have been useful for aligning theory more closely to lived realities, whilst revealing the camp’s spillover into urban life. Nonetheless, daily life in camps continues to unfold under a powerful and effective humanitarian rationale and management (Jansen, 2011) and accordingly, insufficient attention has been given to the camp as a time and place of (active) waiting such forces induce. Furthermore, despite a growing child-focus, existing studies are adult-centric, overlooking the perspectives of those no longer children but yet to acquire locally defined markers of social adulthood. Thus, the thesis asks: What can a lens of youth in waiting bring to an understanding of the camp? This is an interesting approach given the conceptual similarities between ‘youth’ and the ‘camp’, both liminal times and places of transit, but increasingly experienced by many worldwide as stuckness and permanence. Moreover, it is young, displaced people’s heightened and complex rapport with waiting that merit its focus. Those in camps wait for onwards physical mobility like many across generations, but also for social (inter-generational) mobility, and need to enter adulthood.

The study finds young people’s portrayals of encampment are intimately tied to their generational stage and ensuing perceptions of ‘waiting to leave’. Speaking to Jansen’s (2016) hypothesis of ‘humanitarian urbanising’ camps as ‘nodal points’ for people to build themselves for unknown durations, young people describe Dzaleka as a temporary “bridge” providing particular pathways for them to move forwards with their lives. Whilst some perceive their waiting as “stuckness”, onwards movement through third-country resettlement the only way to transition from youth, others, having had more time to see this unlikely opportunity for the “double-edged sword” (Brun, 2015) it is, and focussing on formal learning in the camp, are “taking steps” within Dzaleka; waiting described as a time to be “living where you are”. The study therefore aims to bring new insights into ‘forced’ mobility and ‘durable solutions’, displaced young people fleeing a wider set of interconnected insecurities beyond conflict and violence alone, now looking to escape ‘waithood’, the camp potentially being a unique time and place to do so.
Lay Summary

This thesis explores the multifaceted but largely overlooked relationship between living in a refugee camp whilst being young and attempting to transition into adulthood. I aim to expand current understandings of camps, that speak of urbanising spaces and sites of ‘contradictions’, by exploring the thoughts and experiences of 40 young people, aged 17 to 29, living in Dzaleka refugee camp in Malawi. I do so by focussing on how these young people portray the camp as a “bridge”, and as a temporary place of “waiting”. Such terms having dual meanings for young people who are not only waiting to leave Dzaleka, as many – young and old – are, but also to leave their generational stage of youth and move forwards with their lives.

Asking what a lens of ‘youth in waiting’ can bring to an understanding of the camp, the study finds young people’s portrayals of encampment are intimately tied to their generational stage and perceptions of ‘waiting to leave’. Alluding to Jansen’s (2016) idea of refugee camps as spaces where people are able to build themselves for unknown durations, young people draw attention to the particular pathways, somewhat unique to camps and perhaps unavailable back home, that Dzaleka provides them for moving forwards with their lives.

For some, waiting is experienced as “stuckness” and it is only if they can be chosen for third-country resettlement – a new life in the United States or Canada – that they will be able to take on the roles and responsibilities they attribute to adulthood. However, for others, having had more time to see this unlikely opportunity for the “double-edged sword” (Brun, 2015) it is, they are focussing on formal learning in the camp and are “taking steps” within Dzaleka; waiting described as a time to be “living where you are”. The study therefore aims to bring new insights into ‘forced’ mobility, displaced young people fleeing a wider set of interconnected insecurities beyond conflict and violence alone, also looking to escape ‘waithood’, the camp potentially being a unique time and place to do so.
Declaration

I declare that the thesis has been composed by myself, the work submitted is my own, and that the work has not been submitted for any other degree or professional qualification. I confirm that appropriate credit has been given within this thesis where reference has been made to the work of others.

Joshua Anderson-Rose

Signed:

Date: 30th August 2022
Acknowledgements

Whilst writing a Ph.D thesis is said to be, and at times is, a long and lonely process, the words that unfold across the pages of this thesis are nonetheless the product of numerous people’s guidance, support and openness in sharing their stories with me.

At first is the guidance provided by my supervisors, Gerhard Anders, Emma Davidson, and Jean-Benoît Falisse, each offering indispensable critique and suggestions from their own disciplines and a team enabling the thesis to take on its current form. Their timely feedback has enabled the writing to progress smoothly, and our frequent meetings have ensured these years have been a rich experience of personal and academic development. Somewhat also taking on a guiding role throughout this journey is fellow Ph.D candidate Tanja Hendriks. Whether over a pint in Edinburgh or Malawi, her friendship and insights, the latter grounded in vast experience and intellect, have provided me with much reassurance and motivation during this process. I wish her the best of luck in a promising academic career.

The study could not have taken place without the generous financial support provided by the Leverhulme Trust, and I thank the trust for extending their funding as a result of Covid-19.

In Malawi, I thank the Secretary for Homeland Security for approving the study and the National Committee on Research in Social Sciences and Humanities for granting ethical clearance. I thank the Centre of Social Research at the University of Malawi in Zomba for their affiliation and in particular I thank Dr Fidelis Edge Kanyongolo for his unique knowledge and guidance whilst in Malawi.

In Dzaleka, I thank the Camp Manager, Patricia Sinoya, for orientating me on my first day, introducing me to the community leaders and for allowing me to move freely throughout my time there. I would also like to express deep gratitude to Nelson, my interpreter, who was always available despite many work and family commitments and to my Burundian host family who provided me with a home and family in Dzaleka, whilst sharing innumerable tasty meals.

The enduring support I have received from my family has without doubt pushed me to see this degree through to the end. Foremost my mother whose never-ending tea and toast interruptions have kept me at the desk, my brothers who re-kindle my drive through their constant fascination in the project, and from my Grandad who, although does not quite understand why 10 years of university are needed before attempting to get a job, has expressed unwavering interest in my journey.

Cecilia, first in Denmark as a fellow Master’s student, then in Edinburgh and Malawi, and now in Spain as we begin our newest adventure, your presence in my life these years has been transformative. Now finishing the thesis, I promise to put the laptop away and finally become a bit more present in our lives.

Yet, most of all, I thank the young people living in Dzaleka who shared their time with me. For introducing me to their stories, their camp, and their families, and for once again telling their experiences to someone else intruding into their lives, I express my sincere gratitude and hopes that their waiting may come to pass soon. I have learnt much about the world and myself from our discussions and I hope these feelings may also be true for some of you.
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Introduction

In his three fleeting visits to Dzaleka in 1960, 1970 and 2011, Colin Baker (2011), a former Assistant District Commissioner of Dowa during the British Colonial era, provides an interesting, although somewhat limited account (Donald, 2014; Makhumula, 2019) of how this setting has changed over the years. Through a series of walks, he takes the reader through this shifting landscape, beginning with its early life as a ‘Federal Prison Farm’, where a hundred inmates grew their own food in a green and open, ungated environment. Ten years later, Nyasaland having gained its independence in 1964 and renamed ‘Malawi’ under the autocratic presidency of Hastings Kamuzu Banda, he explains how ‘Dzaleka Detention Centre’ had been inaugurated in 1965 to hold political prisoners, now surrounded by high barbed wire fences, and managed by Banda’s ‘Young Pioneers’. Young men who claimed for the camp a “fearsome reputation for the systematic brutality to which its inmates were exposed” (McCracken, 2012, p.445). Yet, returning in 2011, he describes a “dustier, drier and far less green” setting, lacking warders or pioneers, containing many “officials” and 15,000 refugees; he notes the camp’s “permanence” and “hopelessness” for the future (Baker, 2011, p.39).

This thesis draws on research conducted ten years after Baker’s final walk around Dzaleka, and although it could still be portrayed as an outsider’s brief and partial glimpse into a world far reached from his own, it attempts instead to build its chapters through the stories, narratives and experiences of young people living there. For, whilst Baker remarks how Dzaleka can be “inadequately” described as a “place” – speaking to discussions of camps as ‘non-places’ (Auge, 1995) and more traditional top-down Agambian approaches to understanding such spaces – young people’s stories reveal Dzaleka is very much a place; one where everyday life continues to unfold, meanings are made and re-made, and dreams are pursued. Moreover, it is clear, and as this thesis aims to demonstrate, that dominant portrayals of camps as places of permanence and hopelessness must be questioned, young people share interesting depictions of Dzaleka as a temporary “bridge”, whose various pathways enable them to get by and maintain hope for the future.

Thus, whilst it is said you can still hear the voices of those early prisoners on a quiet day, and although many living there now describe it as an “open prison”, following the detention centre’s closure in 1973, Dzaleka was re-opened in 1993 to deal with the growing influx of people fleeing conflicts in the Great Lakes region of Sub-Saharan Africa and the Horn of Africa. Arriving there today, much like before, it is, as suggested, ‘open’. Examining the reservations made by the Government of Malawi when ratifying the 1951 Convention on Refugees, that limit freedom of movement and rights to employment – a restrictive approach adopted by several refugee receiving countries in the region – one would not assume this to be the case.
Yet, the barbed wire fences once containing inmates are now used to build walls or protect trees from goats and one can find numerous displaced persons, mainly Rwandan and Burundian, living, attending schools, and working, albeit somewhat precariously, throughout Malawi.

Although my first day in Dzaleka coincided with its weekly market, the busy movement along the road running through the camp and the large number of Malawians also buying or selling there and, as I would later learn, using the range of services in the camp – the health clinic, schools or as ‘beneficiaries’ of humanitarian organisations – builds a somewhat blurred distinction between the camp and its host community. Unlike the “straight rows of blue and white huts, its equally straight roads, and its evenly distributed water stands” that Turner (2001, p.1) described on arrival in Lukole in Tanzania, leaving the minibus that first day it appeared I had simply arrived at another Malawian road-side market town.

Despite its cartographic absence and an official discourse occasionally re-affirming Dzaleka’s impending closure with the relocation of those living there to the north of the country, the camp’s longevity, expanding population and periphery, its proximity to Malawi’s capital and main airport, in combination with the recently completed road leading there and a yearly music festival, Tumaini, attended by people from around the world, position Dzaleka as more of a permanent and visible site compared to the ad-quio of locating refugee camps in rural, border areas “out of sight and mind” (Betts & Collier, 2017, p.41).

“Going to town” is how many Malawians living in villages nearby describe their visits to the camp. Malawian men sell charcoal and bricks, frequent bars and brothels, whilst elderly women go to beg, clean houses, wash clothes or wait outside the monthly food distribution, Mapokezi, to carry basic necessities home for those living there; this draws attention to the camp’s location in one of the poorest countries in the world. Described as a town by its inhabitants as well, it is clear Dzaleka is no longer driven solely by a ‘logic of emergency’ (Martin, 2015) seen in younger camps, but one of development by humanitarian organisations and one of normality by those living there. For, despite their considerable food, health, and work insecurity and the (fluid) restrictions these individuals must navigate, attempts are constantly being (re)made to get on with routines of everyday life.

Introduced in this manner, a fluid and ambiguous picture of Dzaleka emerges. A place that is closed but open, temporary but permanent, invisible but visible, a place of constraint and opportunity, where the divide between refugee and citizen, inside and out becomes blurred. Potentially shifting this landscape, on the 1st of April 2021, a year after fieldwork, the government announced, citing security concerns linked to ongoing troubles in Northern Mozambique, that all refugees and asylum seekers living and doing businesses outside
Dzaleka must return to the camp. The Minister for Homeland Security explained – with connotations of managing ‘matter out of place’ (Malkki, 1995) and guiding us to traditional approaches – “We are not chasing them, we just want them to be where they should be” (AlJazeera, 2021). Yet, over a year later, with strong criticism from the UNHCR and human rights groups, this has yet to be enforced and importantly, during fieldwork this decision had not been announced and Dzaleka – much like numerous camps – notwithstanding an official discourse of ‘temporariness’ and an official policy of restrictions, remained open, fluid and ever-resembling a town.

This brief portrayal speaks to a growing body of literature that sees camps as places of ‘indistinction’ (Oesch, 2017) and ‘contradiction’ (Grayson, 2017). Described as a ‘third way’ in refugee studies (Woroniecka-krzyzanowska, 2019), one grounded in an urban shift (Martin, 2015), these studies have aligned theory more closely to lived realities, whilst responding to the dichotomy of approaching camps either as places of confinement and control or as places where individuals impact their surroundings whilst getting on with daily life. Nonetheless, it remains that in many camps worldwide, especially in Sub-Saharan Africa, routines and experiences of quotidian life continue to unfold under a powerful and effective humanitarian rationale and management (Jansen, 2011). As such, I contend – perhaps due to the (important) need to emphasise active agentic capacities – insufficient attention has been given to the camp as a time and place of waiting such forces induce. Whilst, what Bandak and Janeja (2020) term the ‘politics of waiting’, how those in power use waiting as an instrument of control, has been explored (see Agamben, 1998; Agier, 2002; Bissell, 2007), the ‘poetics of waiting’, how those actually living in camps give meaning to this, needs further exploration (Conlon, 2011). This is especially so for those yet to acquire, increasingly out of reach, markers of social adulthood. The perspectives of young, displaced people require greater consideration given the adult-centricity of existing studies.

Accordingly, the study asks: **What can a lens of youth in waiting bring to an understanding of the camp?** This is an interesting approach given the conceptual similarities between ‘youth’ and the ‘camp’, both liminal times and places of transit, but increasingly experienced as stuckness and permanence. The notion of ‘waithood’ is an increasingly apt lens to understand the prolonged, suspended, difficult and dynamic transition into adult life many young people undergo worldwide (Honwana, 2019). Moreover, it is young, displaced people’s heightened rapport with waiting that merits its focus. Those in camps wait not only for physical mobility

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1 A shift from an original and much broader research question which sought to understand ‘how young people make sense of their lived environment in Dzaleka’; a focus influenced by Turner’s (2001) thesis on young Burundians in Tanzania. However, as fieldwork unfolded, it became clear that young people’s multifaceted experiences of waiting and waithood were key to their thoughts of encampment and as such, fleshing out such relationships would be crucial for revealing how a youth perspective(s) can contribute to existing camp studies.
like many across generations, but also for social (inter-generational) mobility and enter adulthood. Mainstreaming age, ‘youth in waiting’ is thus a useful and needed lens to better understand camps; young people’s thoughts of encampment are intimately tied to their generational stage, ensuing perceptions of ‘waiting to leave’ and their growing desire to move forwards with their lives.

To respond to this question, from July 2019 to March 2020, using mixed ambulatory and visual research methods, I conducted research with 40 young men and women from the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), Burundi, Rwanda, and Somalia living in Dzaleka for varying amounts of years. Exploring the stories they shared, navigating between their narratives and experiences, and paying attention to where these contradict, this thesis reveals the different ways such individuals perceive their lived environment in Dzaleka. Aligning with ‘third way’ studies – but contributing to them through a lens of ‘youth’ – the camp is at first a place of contradiction, of both constraint and opportunity. The various camp (and non-camp) specific challenges meaning young people find themselves “stuck” in waithood, unable to transition into social adulthood. Yet, also described as a “school” or “teacher”, the camp appears to be a place of opportunity, one enabling young people to “cope” and get by. The study finding youth to be a ‘thickener’ (Klocker, 2007) of agency in camps.

Expanding existing discussions, the study reveals how the camp is also a place of ‘waiting’ for young people – waiting to both leave and ‘become’ – their thoughts of Dzaleka differentiated by the meaning they attach to this multifaceted waiting. Many, influenced by their strong belief in being resettled soon, describe waiting as “stuckness”, unable to move forwards with their lives whilst they remain in the camp; physical and social (inter-generational) mobility going hand-in-hand. However, others, those who have perhaps had enough time to realise resettlement for the ‘double-edged sword’ (Brun, 2015) it is – and without familiar support in the camp – are not waiting to leave to move forwards with their lives. These young people see Dzaleka as a place where they are taking steps to “become someone” through formal learning and by “making sense” where they are. Crucial, and with implications for how ‘forced’ mobility and ‘durable solutions’ are conceptualised, is how all young people, regardless of how they make sense of waiting, describe the camp as a “bridge”. Their “camp life” not the final destination but a temporary stepping point providing somewhat unique pathways for them to move forwards with their lives. A finding that speaks, and lends weight to Jansen’s (2016) hypothesis of ‘humanitarian urbanising’ camps as ‘nodal points’ for people to build themselves for unknown durations.

In this introductory chapter I lay the foundations for such discussions by firstly positioning the study in previous literature that attempts to understand such settings. I then briefly outline the
study’s analytical approach to ‘youth’, the lenses of ‘waiting’ and ‘waithood’ that are worn to explore the empirical data, before explaining the methodology employed to gather said data.

**Locating the study**

As noted, this study positions itself in recent discussions of camps as urbanising spaces of indistinction and contradiction, of opportunity and constraint, where time and space are highly structured by governmental and humanitarian institutions, but where ‘normal’, quotidian life continues to unfold. Although, as we will see, such studies have transitioned beyond traditional ‘Agambean’ (1995, 1998, 2000) approaches to camps, it is useful to begin by outlining earlier understandings for their capacity to speak to a dominant way many inhabiting sites of encampment continue to make sense of their lived environments as places of constraint and inability to have a say over one’s life (Minca, 2007).

“Once they had left their homeland they remained homeless, once they had left their state they became stateless, once they had been deprived of their human rights they were rightless, the scum of the earth” (Arendt, 1958, p.267).

Writing in the years following the Second World War and arguably dominating early studies of displaced peoples, Arendt (1958) maintains that a refugee is one who – stateless and without citizenship – can no longer fall back on the human rights they once enjoyed as part of a nation state. Those for whom the rules of the world no longer apply are reduced to their biological status, they become, “the scum of the earth”. Some years later and inspired by her work, Agamben (1995, 1998, 2000) provides the dominant early approach to understanding the workings and dynamics of refugee camps; doing so by applying Arendt’s (1958) analysis of totalitarian regimes to Foucault’s (1991) notion of ‘Biopolitics’. For Agamben, the ‘stateless’ and ‘rightless’ refugee, disrupting the ‘structure of the state’ – the nexus between territory, state and citizenship – is central for understanding the modern world. He affirms, “by breaking the continuity between man and citizen, nativity and nationality, they put the originary fiction of modern sovereignty in crisis” (1998, p.131). As a response, and alluding to what he defines as the origin of sovereign power, to decide over “bare life” (1998, p.6) separating it from life worth living, Agamben suggests the state takes into its care as a principal role, the “biopolitical life of the nation” (2000, p.45). He goes on to explain, whilst reduced to bare life and thus, excluded from political life, such individuals remain included through the biopolitical power employed to govern them and this ‘state of exception’ acquires “permanent spatial arrangement” in the form of the camp (2000, p.41). Despite basing his analysis on Nazi concentration camps, Agamben (1998) argues the proliferation of such spatial arrangements at the turn of the century demonstrates normal law continues to be suspended and states of exception created, regardless of the reasons residents have for occupying such spaces.
Grounded in this understanding, early approaches to camps and those within focussed on the idea of a unitary and strong sovereign exercising absolute biopolitical power in exceptional spaces where individuals are reduced to bare life, stripped of their agency. A line of thought visible for example in Edkins's (2000) argument that NATO approached those in Macedonian refugee camps following the 1998-9 Kosovo War as biological bodies who needed saving, or Diken's (2004) premise that the Australian government aims to “capture” the “nomadic” in Woomera camp, blurring the distinction between legality and illegality. Moreover, Agamben’s ideas have been engaged with more recently (see Corbet, 2015; Fassin & Pandolfi, 2010; Fresia & Von Känel, 2015; Saunders, 2014) to critique the humanitarian approach to displaced peoples for imposing discourses of victimhood, whilst reducing people to labels, numbers and statistics for efficiency and to please donors.

However, further studies have found fault with Agamben’s early analysis. Questioning his notion of a strong and absolute authority managing these spaces, academics have argued for a plethora of overlapping and competing sovereign actors. For example, Fresia and Von Känel (2015) explore the competing rationalities created through the exclusionary nature of the camp exemplified in fences and security gates on one hand and the normalisation policies implemented at school, aiming to bring children into the global education system, on the other. Whilst, Ramadan and Fregonese (2017), in their examination of Palestinian refugee camps in Lebanon, propose the idea of ‘hybridity’ to understand the multiple actors governing these camps. Hybrid spaces where different organisations, state and non-state, the UNRWA and militant groups, come together to decide over the state of exception. Maestri (2017) expands such discussions suggesting sovereignty emerging in camps is more fluid than Agamben infers, constantly evolving in response to multiple actors competing for sovereign power.

Clearly this more ‘fractured’ picture – an assemblage of actors involved in camp governance – is useful for bringing theory closer to the contemporary, complex lived realities of camps. Yet, it is also clear that such studies represent top-down approaches, they explore only those directly involved with camp management and by limiting their analysis so, we develop only a partial view of the camp. As Jefferson et al (2019) highlight, such a view is arguably one of confinement and constraint. Affirming sites of confinement are, “central to the emergence of the social sciences, because they radicalise the central question of the relationship between structure and agency”, Jefferson et al (2019, p.4) contend early studies reproduced the all-powerful presence of confining institutions, yet, whilst such structures do exist and bear down on people, “we can only learn about human agency by exploring how these structures are lived, negotiated, resisted, and reproduced in daily life”. Thus, in what some describe as the ‘political turn’ in refugee studies (Woroniecka-krzyzanowska, 2019) or perhaps even the
beginning of ‘Refugee Studies’ itself (Voutira & Doná, 2007), a growing body of research has adopted a ‘bottom-up’ approach, exploring camps from the perspectives of those living there.

Enabling them to do so was a transition from earlier notions of ‘bare life’ to approaching people in camps as social actors, with diverse historical, political and cultural backgrounds, who, despite facing certain vulnerabilities, still possess the capacity to make meaningful decisions over their livelihoods and futures. Arguably grounding this shift is the work of Malkki (1992; 1995; 1996) who critiques the more essentialist or sedentary approaches of earlier studies which she contends, rooted identity to place and created a universal refugee experience or ‘anonymous corporeality’ (Malkki, 1995). She maintains, by examining what it means to be a refugee from the perspective of a refugee, by listening to their narratives of the past, opinions of the present and aspirations for the future, the historicity and politics, ever-present in their lives, can be revealed (Malkki, 1996).

Since this ‘shift’, a plethora of studies (Bradley, 2014; Bulley, 2014; Dunn & Cons, 2014; Englund, 1998; Gatrell, 2016; Hampshire et al., 2008; Jansen, 2011) have demonstrated a bottom-up, and often ‘ethnographic’ approach to understanding camps and those living there, demonstrating how ‘normal’ life continues despite the challenges one confronts there. An influential example is provided in Turner’s (1999; 2001; 2005; 2006) research with Burundian men in Tanzanian. Turner (2005) contends that the strong biopolitical power exerted in camps should not overshadow the spaces young men, ‘liminal experts’, can create for themselves out of reach of those above due to the new “dehistoricising” setting created by humanitarian actors (2006, pp.775–776). In a similar manner, in their study of Palestinian camps in Lebanon, Hanafi and Long (2010) shift the discourse from bare life to a political one by exploring how refugees, faced with a lacuna of guidance from camp institutions, develop their own mentalities of governance, an ‘economy of morals’ grounded in Islam, that enables them to maintain structures and daily order. Oka (2014) reveals how refugees express agency through ‘agentive consumption’, using consumption of small luxury and comfort goods to restore some sense of normalcy and dignity while navigating the ‘static transience’ of the camp. Whilst Makhumula’s (2019) study of Dzaleka draws upon the camp’s annual music festival, Tumaini (“we hope”), to shed light on the multiculturalism of the camp and its integration with the host community, shifting the narrative away from one solely of constraint and limitation.

Accordingly, a dichotomy is visible between seeing camps as places of constraint and confinement, where an assemblage of actors constituting the humanitarian regime, manage bare life, versus the idea of agentic individuals living in camps, confronting challenges, but at the same time trying to recreate what has been disrupted through displacement and get on
with their lives. To navigate this tension, and importantly, to see how those living there make sense of this, a third approach has emerged of seeing camps as places of ‘contradictions’ (Grayson, 2017), zones of ‘indistinction’ (Oesch, 2017), or as blurred spaces of ‘ambiguity’ (Woroniecka-krzyzanowska, 2019); enabling one to better understand the more messy reality of the camp and it is within the third way that this study theoretically situates itself.

Arguably, much of this ambiguity has developed with the “spill-over” of the camp into urban life (Martin, 2015), reflected in an ‘urban’ shift in camp studies (Woroniecka-krzyzanowska, 2019), instigated through the work of Agier (2002). Agier draws upon the array of heterogenous identities in these “novel socio-spatial form[s]” (2002, p.320) – starting out as empty spaces but becoming, “sites of an enduring organization of space, social life and system of power that exist nowhere else” (2002a, p.322) – to show how something resembling a city slowly develops. However, he affirms that whilst the camp persists to be managed in the name of emergency, its enduring reality failed to be recognised, it cannot make this transition, remaining a “naked city”, “a waiting zone outside of society” (Agier et al., 2002a, p.332). Numerous studies have since approached camps through an ‘urban’ lens (Jansen, 2015; Oka, 2014) notably Martin (2015) in Palestinian camps of Beirut, who proposes the notion of ‘campscapes’ to describe enlarged states of exception where the divide between the camp and its surroundings, between refugee and citizen, becomes blurred. Responding to Agier, Martin contends such spaces are clearly becoming permeant solutions to ever-protracting displacements and should no longer be approached through a logic of emergency but one of ‘normality’ and as spaces of ‘evolution’, with academics needing to be ready to embrace this “new framework of spatial analysis” (2015, p.16).

As seen earlier, it is clear Dzaleka represents Agier’s, no longer so ‘novel’, socio-spatial form, a context ever-resenting a more urban space. A setting inhabited and navigated by numerous people of varying identities and nationalities, a place many living there and nearby describe as a ‘town’, located only 45km from Malawi’s capital and 20km from the main airport. Its permanence demonstrated through its longevity and its ‘normality’ exemplified through the absence of fences or gates and people, refugees and Malawians, going to work, attending schools, using a health centre and buying or selling at the camp’s weekly market; all factors that blur various boundaries. Moreover, the ambiguous or contradictory nature of the camp stands out in the difference between an official government discourse of restriction and confinement versus a more fluid reality of refugee mobility, livelihoods, and education beyond the camp. With all this in mind, an urban lens has some traction for better understanding such a context, yet, at the same time, whilst Dzaleka’s integration with its surroundings is evident and although humanitarian logic may have shifted from one of emergency to normalcy, it is
clearly still a place where time and space is highly structured by governmental and humanitarian institutions or actors.

It should be noted that this urban orientated ‘third way’ is overly grounded in studies conducted in the Middle East. A context with a tendency for urban settlements compared to Sub-Saharan Africa where there is a prevalence for policies of encampment and refugee camps (Fiddian-Qasmiyeh, 2016). As such, the utility of this shift in camp studies is potentially limited for helping us to understand contexts of encampment in Sub-Saharan African where the presence of institutions managing daily life of displaced peoples is more visible. Grounded in his study of refugee camps in Kenya, Jansen (2016) is keen to point out the issues with focussing on urban literature when attempting to understand the modern refugee camp. He (2016, p.1) contends that an analogy with urban spaces is productive for recognising:

“[…] social and ethnic diversity, economic stratification, creative entrepreneurship, and forms of institutional multiplicity and hybrid governance, but it fails to come to terms with the routines of regulation and control that characterise the temporary permanence of the camp”

Offering an approach that resonates more closely with this ambiguity, Jansen (2016) proposes the notion of ‘humanitarian urbanism’. Building upon Martin’s (2015) analysis of camps, Jansen suggests these are not unfinished cities as Agier infers, but, in becoming permanent humanitarian solutions to ever-protracting displacements, have evolved into their own form of urban space. One where individuals are creative, resilient, politically active and getting on with routines of everyday life (Horst, 2006; Jansen, 2011), but doing so, “under a powerful and effective humanitarian rationale and management” (Jansen, 2016, p.2). Asking whether the camp in this condition may reveal a new form of settlement in a broader spectrum of mobility – potentially a durable solution in itself – Jansen (2016) concludes by hypothesising that such camps may therefore be ‘nodal points’ for people to build their lives for unknown durations. Echoing Martin (2015) who suggests individuals in camps, now spaces of ‘normality’ and ‘evolution’, are potentially using various coping strategies to take advantage of this expanding liminal environment.

Thus, one can see debates in refugee and camp studies have shifted from ideas of unitary and all-powerful sovereigns to more fractured portrayals of multiple actors involved in camp management. Moreover, those living in camps have gone from ‘bare life’ to agentic beings who, despite facing considerable constraints, have the capacity to influence their surroundings whilst getting on with their lives. With the arrival of more bottom-up approaches and the emerging ‘third’ way of seeing camps as spaces of contradiction and ambiguity, a more holistic
and complex picture has emerged. Yet, highlighting the limitations of recent studies, the notion of humanitarian urbanism was introduced, which offers a better lens to understand the enduring and at times over-bearing presence of humanitarian institutions who continue to structure much of daily life in protracted contexts of encampment. It is at the precipice of these further studies that this research grounds itself, it attempts to respond to questions posed by academics such as Martin (2015) and Jansen (2016), to expand understandings of how those living in camps give meaning to these complex, fractured and shifting environments. Yet, it remains, many of these aforementioned studies adopt an adult-centric approach and as such, can only provide a partial view of the camp. Whilst a growing body of research has begun to explore the camp from a child’s perspective (see Atkinson, 2007; Ball & Moselle, 2015; Bash & Zezlina-Phillips, 2006; Dobson, 2009; Eide & Hjern, 2013; Ensor, 2017; Evans & Mayer, 2012; Hart, 2004; Hieronymi, 2009; Orgocka, 2012) the thoughts, aspirations and experiences of young people or ‘youth’ have received relatively less attention and it is through a youth perspective(s) that this study attempts to learn more about the camp.

The neglect of youth as a social group in refugee research has been noted (Ball & Moselle, 2016; Chatty, 2010; Grayson, 2017; Maguire, 2012; Wagner, 2017). Explanations include young people failing to be vulnerable enough for ‘benevolent’ humanitarian organisations (Turner, 2001), or the dominant child-adult chronological shift at 18 overlooking this transitional stage (Grayson, 2017) and a general failure to mainstream age in social sciences (Punch, 2019). While some studies have placed young people as the referent of analysis, these tend to employ psychological approaches and ground themselves in western models of generational developmental stages (Chatty, 2010; Grayson, 2017). Others have gone further, they focus on how young people express agency, but are dominated by studies in Northern Africa and the Middle East (see Chatty, 2010; Hart, 2008; Hoodfar, 2008) or tend to reinforce ‘traditional’ approaches, portraying young people as ‘stuck’ (Singerman, 2007). The lacuna of studies in Sub-Saharan Africa is particularly poignant as, although it has the world’s most youthful population, youth-centric policies are lacking and young people, mostly males, are commonly approached through harmful notions of ‘youth bulge’ and ‘instability’ (Durham, 2000; Sommers, 2011).

An important, recent exception, and a study building the ‘third’ way, includes Grayson’s (2017) research with young Somalians in Kakuma refugee camp. Grayson (2016, p.207) argues it is crucial to engage with the contradictions of camps to better understand the reality of young people’s lives there. She demonstrates how Kakuma is a place of constraint and opportunity for young people, detrimentally impacting their thoughts of the past, present, and future whilst at the same time giving them access to, “possible resettlement, basic education, other facilities and even work, albeit poorly paid” (2017, p.191). Fleshing out this tension, she finds that whilst
young people maintain hope for the future, they are often overwhelmed by constraints, suggesting it is only when they leave that they will be able to move forwards with their lives, using skills they may have learnt there. This research builds from and echoes much of Grayson’s findings, yet, finding that young people’s broad experience of encampment in Dzaleka is one of waiting, for physical and social (generational) mobility, I contend that greater attention be given to what meanings different young people, of various nationalities and either growing up in the camp or arriving more recently, give to this more multifaceted notion of waiting.

Approaching ‘youth’

Before outlining the analytical approach employed by this study, it is useful to briefly explore how ‘youth’ and ‘young people’ are conceptually approached in later discussions. Entering Dzaleka and any camp coordinated by the UNHCR, one is at first confronted by definitions of youth and other life stages employed by this body and its various implementing partners. These ‘universal’ definitions focus primarily on biological age, the UNHCR defining youth as those aged 15 to 24. This bracket is increased to 35 by the African Union and the African Youth Charter (2006), perhaps acknowledging the more prolonged nature of youth on the continent, to which we return shortly. While the Government of Malawi (2013) sees youth from 10 to 35. Biological approaches that are useful for inclusion and visibility, but criticised for reducing the complexity of age to a chronological number (Hart, 2014b).

Shifting to a ‘life-stage’ model, youth becomes a developmental period between childhood and adulthood, where individuals are passing through puberty, participating in education, are not yet married or have a family of their own, but are looking to transition into livelihoods (DeJaeghere et al., 2016). It is a transitional stage where young people look to take on new roles and responsibilities associated with social adulthood (Honwana, 2012), corresponding to a shift from dependence to independence (Grayson, 2017). Such an approach is applied worldwide (Chatty, 2010), despite being what Punch (2002, p.124) describes as a “minority world concept”, grounded in Western perspectives of generational social junctures (DeJaeghere et al., 2016). Thus, this model has been criticised for being overly linear and for seeing standardised paths into adulthood as given (Honwana, 2012). Honwana (2012) contends that transitions do not follow neat and unidirectional patterns and instead young people’s attempts at transitioning are both enabled and constrained by local social-economic and political conditions. Moreover, leaving the stage of youth is not always permanent as many individuals find themselves once again in this stage if they cannot maintain ‘adult’ status (Sommers, 2011).
Accordingly, generational stages are neither natural nor given (Honwana, 2012) and youth is ultimately a lived experience taking on its own meanings under different social, cultural, economic and political contexts. Despite the issues outlined regarding the life-stage model it is useful nonetheless as the generational categories it offers have become an emic reality for many (Christiansen et al., 2006, p.15), including those in Dzaleka. Thus, whilst refraining from approaching these categories as rigid or linear, this study contends that local contexts must be examined to get local definitions (Bluebond-Langer & Korbin, 2007) and adopts a definition of youth provided by Honwana (2012, p.13) as, “defined by social expectations and responsibilities and considers all those who have not yet been able to attain social adulthood, despite their age, as youth”.

For reasons of practicality, in this research an age-range of 16 to 26 was used as an early guide to identify participants. Such a range aligns with those who were finishing secondary school, if attending, and looking to transition towards their aspirations. ‘Young people’ was used over ‘youth’ to provide a less weighted term than those in the life-stage model; terms taking on extended meanings in humanitarian settings where a developmental approach to younger generations is adopted (Hart, 2014a; Punch & Tisdall, 2012; Woodhead, 2009). However, these life-stages have become an emic reality and the phrase youth, or kijana in Swahili and jeunes in French, were the terms used by young people when referring to their generational stage. Nonetheless, in the chapters there is a tendency to prefer ‘young people’ for the individuals and ‘youth’ for their stage of life. Overall, self-identification as youth was key, resulting in participants aged 17 to 29. Ascertaining what these young people identify with is explored throughout the thesis, however, as perhaps would be found in any context, a tension is visible between how they think the stage of youth should be experienced and how it manifests itself in reality; the difference between youth the epistemological construct and youth the observable phenomenon (paraphrase, Honig, 2009). Whilst Chapter 2 fleshes out the latter, here we can briefly build the local construct of youth by shedding light on how the young people who participated in the study give meaning to this generational stage.

From the outset, many of the young people I spent time with during fieldwork stressed that ‘youth’ is a heterogenous group of individuals, with different “backgrounds”, “experiences”, and ways of thinking. They can be “stubborn”, with “childish minds” and at times, act irresponsibly, but have much “potential”, “talent” and “ambitions”, able to “achieve whatever they want”. It is a temporary “stage” or “level” when one begins to “see life differently”; he or she is “a person between childish and going to another level, to be an elder, or a big man”. It is a time of becoming, to “find out who you are”, and “your place in the world”. A few acknowledge this is not a straightforward but often confusing time, one girl suggesting, “At this
age, someone is not stable, they do not know their self a lot, they wake up a different person, it is hard to take a decision and know your future, it’s complicated”. However, as another describes in a comment echoing humanitarian lingo and perhaps pointing to the influence of the humanitarian set-up of the camp – something explored in Chapter 5 – this does not overcloud a young person’s capacity to move forwards:

“They are the ones still trying things out, seeing what can or can’t work. They don’t have much experience, they are the ones with hot ambitions, still strong, they think they can change the world. It sounds cliché but they are the society of tomorrow, the change makers of tomorrow”.

Grounded in young people’s thoughts of youth as a time of “finding out who you are”, is their description of this stage as a “preparing period”, building oneself for the next level, for their futures. One girl notes how young people are, “learning now to overcome future challenges”, Estella remarks they are, “capable of learning from the past and for the future” and David adds youth is, “just beginning, it is the time to be preparing your life”. Whilst Hermand concludes, “If you play while you are young, you will not get opportunities in the future. Youth is the foundation of life, if you mess it up there is no going back”. All echoing elder people’s comments of youth as the “generation of the future”. Moreover, alluded to in this final comment, “no going back”, when discussing what it means to be a youth, one sees how many young people not only perceive the movement between these generational stages as linear and one-directional, but there is a strong emphasis on the need to “move forwards” through these.

Revealing youth’s ‘relational’ nature (Wyn & White, 1997), young people suggest that compared to childhood, youth should be a time of growing independence and responsibility, “obliged” to be taking steps towards aspirations of marriage. Contrasted with adulthood, it is a time of fewer responsibilities, more freedom and increased physical and social mobility; the later stage described as one of “settledness”, “stability” and greater responsibility, thinking of how to provide for one’s family. Demonstrating a need to move towards this, Loic notes, “I must change stage, it is my obligation”, and speaking of her aspirations, Didi shares, “I dream to be somebody else in the future, I shouldn’t stay in same position, I need to move forward”. As the thesis unfolds, we begin to see further markers young people attach to social adulthood, however, as latter chapters reveal, and something pointed to by Didi, crucial for many in terms of making this transition is the multifarious idea of “becoming someone”, and whilst this context constrains one’s capacity for doing so, we will see that at the same time it also provides various alternative pathways for doing so.
Theoretical framework

Such an approach to youth and young people is seen as most fruitful for positioning the study’s main referent of analysis. Yet, to explore the data, the study also employs analytical ideas of ‘waiting’ and ‘waithood’ that have arguably been overlooked in existing camp studies, and whose relevance and utility emerged inductively over the course of fieldwork.

Waiting as an embodied experience

As a general condition of life (Gasparini, 1995), it is perhaps its familiarity that has obscured waiting as a point of analysis (Schweizer, 2005). Compared to analyses of time and temporality, ‘waiting’ has been a relatively understudied phenomenon (Bandak & Janeja, 2020; Conlon, 2011). Gasparini (2004, p.342) defines it as an “interstice of everyday life”, an “in-between” experience happening in time, often perceived negatively; “nobody likes to wait”, Schweizer (2005, p.778) writes. As Gray (2011, p.420) suggests, this aversion to waiting stems from the “disharmony” it produces between, “inner-life experience and the expectations associated with the progression of mechanical time, leading to impatience and an inability to reconcile these two temporalities”. Waiting thus, becomes “a consciousness of time embodied, of time endured” (Schweizer, 2005, p.272), not found in action’s absence but, “in an uncertain terrain where what is hoped for may or may not occur” (Bandak & Janeja, 2020, p.16). It is therefore defined not by the instant of waiting but by what it is not, “by the past and the future, by memory and anticipation” (Schweizer, 2005, p.789).

Settings of displacement have been portrayed as places of waiting (Conlon, 2011). Often with the effect of building aforementioned ‘traditional’ approaches, defined by Bandak & Janeja (2020, p.4) as the “politics of waiting”, waiting used as a technology of governance and declaration of power. Alluding to Agamben’s (1998) “spaces of exception”, we heard Agier et al. (2002, p.337) describe camps as “waiting zones outside of society”. Whilst Bissel (2007, p.282) affirms, being in waiting is an inevitable part of being in transit, the camp acts as her, “landscape of waiting”, holding “bodies” in “temporary stasis”. Limited (bottom-up) studies have addressed the “poetics of waiting” (Bandak & Janeja, 2020) in displacement, these focuss on its temporalities, shedding light on how those actually waiting shape its modalities. Brun (2015) for example adopts a ‘time’ perspective to reveal how waiting is experienced in a Georgian IDP camp as “protracted uncertainty”, using “agency-in-waiting” to reveal individuals are not simply “stuck in limbo”. Grounded in Marcel’s (1967) thesis on ‘active’ waiting, Brun’s (2015) study aligns with numerous others which have shown waiting is not merely the absence of action (Bandak & Janeja, 2020) or “dead time”, but is “alive” (Bissel, 2007), involving

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2 A common theme in research concerning centres of asylum detention, where waiting is conceptualised as “an exercise of power, one that manipulates others’ time” (Khosravi, 2014, cited in Turnbull, (2015)).
productivity and creativity (Auyero, 2012; Gray, 2011). Yet, within both, refugee-related and waiting bodies of literature there has been little consideration of whether, and if so how, young people also perceive and experience the camp as a place of waiting. I argue that this lens, emerging from the data, is particularly productive here due to the multifaceted nature of young people’s waiting in such settings.

The previous section outlined how young people give meaning to their generational stage – the epistemological construct – as a temporary and transitional period, a time of becoming, to be preparing and building oneself, a time for looking to the future; an understanding, no doubt, shared by many young people worldwide (Worth, 2009). As the thesis reveals, this perception of ‘youth’ closely aligns with how young people describe Dzaleka, both “bridges”, liminal stages, not the “final destination”, but temporary times and places of waiting to move forwards with their lives. In this sense and alluding to why waiting in such a context is differentiated for those in this generational stage, one could suggest young people in settings of encampment are therefore in a state of ‘waiting’, on one hand waiting to become and on the other, to leave, two things which for some, go hand in hand. Yet, as observable phenomena, and as shown in the following chapter, we find that neither materialises exactly as hoped for, and instead, their waiting, in both senses, is becoming ever-prolonged. Nonetheless, it is young people’s conceptual (hoped for) construction of youth and the camp and the ensuing intimate relationship between them, each enabling or constraining the other in different times and spaces, which, not only merits this research, but reveals how and why a lens of waiting holds much traction in such a study.

Thus, looking to explore waiting from the actor’s point of view, one finds even those sharing similar conditions can make sense of waiting and be impacted by it differently (Bandak & Janeja, 2020; see also Bissel, 2007 and Auyero, 2012). Gasparini (1995) discusses three types of waiting: waiting as a provisional interruption, seen as time wasted, one attempts to minimise, avoid or accept it. If accepted, it may become “equipped waiting” filled with substitute activities such as resting or reading and finally, long-term waiting, which, unlike the first two, is not transient but a meaningful experience grounded in a hoped-for outcome. Expanding the latter, Jeffrey (2008) suggests long-term or “chronic” waiting may be experienced as: “surplus” or “unstructured” time – what Schweizer (2005, p.777) defines as “having time without wanting it” – where normal routines are disrupted and one begins to feel the weight of time, no longer performing actions that would otherwise orient them towards the future. Or as “heightened suspense”, where an object of longing dominates all thoughts and actions and finally when

3 Of the latter, ‘waithood’ studies is arguably a part, to which we turn shortly.
this suspense fades and is replaced by a sense of “lost time” or a feeling of being “left behind”, eventually resulting for some in an experience of chronic waiting as “panic” or “inertia”.

Interestingly, a point Jeffrey (2008) and a number of academics (see Bissell, 2007; Gray, 2014; Schweizer, 2005) make is how long-term waiting, beyond the impact of neoliberal economic structural reforms in the global South, is intimately connected to new visions of linear and chronological time in modernity. Emerging from Christianity’s historical conception of linear time, modern (Western) time became aligned with industrial “productive” time; the clock and the calendar organising social life (Bandak & Janeja, 2020). This “means-ends” productivist approach depicts time as “a container waiting to be filled with profitable activity” (Bissell, 2007, p.280). Jeffrey (2008) highlights the “symbolic” violence this enacts on those waiting. Alluding to ‘waithood’, discussed hereafter, he suggests chronic waiting as lost time is particularly resonant for young people on whom waiting exerts a “triple temporal hardship” (2010, p.468), unable to achieve aspirations, make inter-generational transitions and seen as “failures”, “left behind” or “out of sync” (Schweizer, 2005, p.779) for not behaving as they should with regards to time.⁴ Yet, as Schweizer (2005, p.781) contends, “To reduce waiting to purely quantifiable terms is to suppress its qualitative temporal consciousness”, to overlook the embodied experience(s) of waiting (Bissell, 2007).

Thus, from waiting as an ‘in-between’ time to more of an embodied experience, this section has briefly outlined some ideas of waiting that are engaged with in the chapters that follow. However, for those young people who participated in this study we find manifestations of waiting that go beyond previous typologies. As such, we see further notions proposed, including etic concepts of ‘getting by’ and ‘getting out’ and an emic notion of ‘keeping busy’; all building young people’s active navigation of their waiting in Dzaleka. As Gasparini is keen to point out, whilst waiting is a meaningful experience, it is not given meaning to in the same way by all and the following chapters, whilst firstly revealing two narratives young people employ – Dzaleka as a place of constraint and one of learning – go on to demonstrate the different ways young people experience waiting in Dzaleka; the camp taking on different meanings according to which – constraint or learning – holds greater sway for different young people.

Waithood

Whilst approaching young people’s experiences of encampment through a lens of waiting has received relatively little attention, studies of young people worldwide as individuals in a particular condition of waiting, described as ‘waithood’, alluded to by Jeffrey (2010) above, ⁴ The life-stage model emblematic of an overly linear approach to time.
have gained growing consideration. As fieldwork progressed and ‘waiting’s’ utility as an analytical lens became evident, it also became clear that, with regards to how ‘youth’ and the camp play out in young people’s lives – as observable phenomena – much of what young people share speaks to these broader discourses. Grounding such discussions in an African context, Honwana (2012, p.3) writes:

“The majority of African youths are today grappling with a lack of jobs and deficient education. After they leave school with few skills, they are unable to obtain work and become independent – to build, buy, or rent a house for themselves, support their relatives, get married, establish families, and gain social recognition as adults. These attributes of adulthood are becoming increasingly unattainable by the majority of young people in Africa. They are forced to live in a liminal, neither-here-nor-there state; they are no longer children who require care, yet they are not yet considered mature social adults”

Studies have described such young people as individuals facing “social death” (Vigh, 2006), “stuck” in “permanent ambiguity”, “arrested liminality” (Sommers, 2012) or in “Protracted Liminality” (Thieme, 2018). The term that has come to encapsulate this distinct experience is the notion of ‘waithood’ (McEvoy-Levy, 2014). Arguably the authority on this, Honwana explains, “Waithood, a portmanteau term of ‘wait’ and ‘-hood’, is the best way to describe this period of suspension between childhood and adulthood” (2012, p.4), alluding to a prolonged, suspended, difficult and dynamic transition into adult life (Honwana, 2019). Applicable across geographies (Thieme, 2018), Honwana (2012, p.7) speaks of the ‘global waithood generation’ – marginalised and lacking both equity and freedom from want – the group most severely impacted by the “failures of neoliberalism and national politics”. Nonetheless, many note (Bellino, 2018; Craig Jeffrey, 2008; Masquelier, 2013) that such a notion resonates strongly in Africa where young people’s marginalisation appears most entrenched as a result of corruption, bad governance and the unproductive structural adjustment programs of the 1980s:

“Where humiliation hounds many male youth who are simply unable to become men; where far too many female youth endure desperate and strikingly overlooked lives; where governments are seen as predatory and riddled with corruption and nepotism; and where older generations grow more and more detached from the younger generation” (Sommers, 2011, p.297).

First used by Singerman (2007) in her study of young people in the Middle-East, the conceptual roots of waithood can be found in Turner’s (1967) concept of liminality, “a transitional phase where social identities undergo ritual transformation” (as cited in Bellino,
2018, p.542) or “inhabiting a limbo of statuslessness” (Turner, 1967, p.97; as cited in Sommers, 2012, p.3). Honwana contends that it is these roots – drawing attention to a stage where one is, “no longer who he or she was but not yet who he or she will become” (2014, p.14) – that have enabled researchers to examine young people’s lives in their own right. Yet, out of the mounting attention given to the ever increasing number of young people inhabiting this new form of “wait adulthood” (Singerman, 2007), a tension has been identified (DeJaeghere et al., 2016; Finn & Oldfield, 2015; Grabska, 2020; Honwana, 2014; Masquelier, 2013).

On one hand, young people are positioned through what can be described as a ‘deficiency’ (Cassell, 1978) or ‘crisis’ (Masquelier, 2013) approach. Certain studies stress the passivity of young people in their prolonged waiting. Singerman (2007) and Dhillon & Youseff’s (2009) work with displaced young people in the Middle East often cited as early examples of this, portraying such individuals, “in a period of stagnation characterized by helplessness, dependency and boredom” (Masquelier, 2013, p.475) or “inactively lingering” in waithood (Honwana, 2014, p.30). A further example being Auerbach’s (2010) study that describes young people becoming “encapsulated” in “refugeehood”, giving up responsibility for their futures to the UNHCR. Other studies that pertain to the crisis approach explore how young people express their agency in negative or harmful ways, the cause of social and political unrest (DeJaeghere et al., 2016), focussing on twilight activities (Eguavoen, 2010) or depicting them as the cause of insecurity due to their economic “stuckness” and involvement in conflict (Finn & Oldfield, 2015). Such approaches arguably stem from more ‘linear’ or ‘developmental’ conceptualisations of generational transitions, young people “deviant” for failing to live up to this one-way progression into adulthood (Honwana, 2012, p.26), corresponding to Jeffrey’s (2008) ‘symbolic violence’.

On the other hand, a further, ‘productive’ (Masquelier, 2013) approach positions young people as enacting a more ‘dynamic’ form of waithood (Finn & Oldfield, 2015; Honwana, 2012). Portrayed as the ‘makers’ or ‘future’ of society (Honwana & De Boeck, 2005) this view contends that young people are not just “inactively waiting for their situation to change” (Honwana, 2012, p.4), but that waithood signifies a period of “experimentation, improvisation and great creativity as young Africans adopt a range of survival strategies to cope with the daily challenges in their lives” (Honwana, 2014, p.35). Several studies have adopted this more dynamic approach, they shed light on how young people, through a diversity of experiences are actively waiting, creating “independent spaces” (Honwana, 2012, p.85) or what Maira & Soep (2005) describe as ‘youthscapes’, new forms of livelihoods and social relationships on the margins of society.
Vigh (2006, 2010) for example, describes young men in urban Guinea-Bissau attempting to avoid “social death” through the praxis of ‘dubriagem’ or “social navigation”. Masquelier (2013) speaks of young men making meaningful temporalities in waithood, using teatime to reclaim time in productive spaces and orient themselves towards the future. Finn & Oldfield (2015) reveal waithood is not an “empty time” for young men in Freetown, but that they navigate this context to make a living through the praxis of “straining”; a term that speaks to a “provisional” form of agency, recognising serious constraints. Whilst Thieme (2018) demonstrates how young men in Nairobi’s ghettos are navigating insecurity in prolonged waithood through the praxis of the ‘hustle’, a term that recognises constraint and vulnerability but also a “logic of agency” used for “adversity”. A limited number of studies have explored waithood in contexts of displacement. McEvoy-Levy (2014) for example examines how waithood is experienced by young Israelis and Palestinians, where waiting takes on a political dimension, a “patriotic duty”, but also something they are enacting productively through grassroots initiatives. Whilst Grabska (2020) observes young Eritreans navigating waithood by “voting with their feet” and migrating to Sudan to reach Europe. Adopting a gendered approach, Grabska (2020) draws attention to the utility of waithood in its more dynamic sense, for not only being able to see the creativity of young girls in Khartoum, but for enabling her to understand the multifacetedness of generational transitions. Where, although narratives may imply stuckness, experiences exhibiting independence and responsibility suggest partial transitions.

Honwana (2012, p.62) remarks, “We know surprisingly little about the complex subcultures that emerge among people in waithood”. Since writing this, a growing number of studies have emerged shedding light on how young people are inventing “new forms of being and interacting with society” (Honwana, 2012, p.4). Yet, whilst a limited number have expanded the notion of waithood with lenses of mobility and gender, few have explored how it is enacted in contexts of encampment. As noted earlier, several studies have explored young people’s experiences of camps, however, these are lacking the analytical lens of waithood which can enable us to better understand the relationship between prolonged waiting and inter-generational transitions. A useful exception is Bellino’s (2018) research on waithood in Kakuma but is perhaps limited by its focus on (younger) young people still at secondary school. For, in Dzaleka, whilst some try to use formal learning to escape waithood, many do not place such importance on this for the inability of putting into practice the skills they may learn, numerous young people not attending secondary school. Thus, this study attempts to respond to the lacuna and contribute to discussions of young people in waithood by employing this notion in its dynamic and productive sense, whilst building upon Grabska’s (2020) more multifaceted understanding of inter-generational transitions, to see what young people navigating waithood can reveal about the camp.
A note on Agency

Within the bottom-up shift in camp studies, in embodied notions of waiting and dynamic views of waithood, central to such approaches is their heightened engagement with the concept of agency to better understand complex and messy realities. Responding to a narrative of constraint young people share in Chapter 2, Chapter 3 introduces a discussion of young people’s agency in Dzaleka. In that chapter and those that follow we find a ‘relational’ and ‘fluid’ approach to agency is particularly useful for approaching young people’s relationships with the structures managing their lives; etic concepts of ‘thick’ and ‘thin’ agency (Klocker, 2007) and an emic notion of ‘keeping busy’ holding particular traction. Without repeating what is explored there, here it will be useful to briefly outline the conceptual foundations of such discussions. Grounding this study’s approach to agency is Giddens’ (1984) writing on the matter, his definition of an ‘agent’ and his understanding of the structure-agency relationship.

In his ‘structuration theory’, Giddens (1984, p.14) contends that to be an agent, one must:

[…] be able to deploy a range of causal powers, including that of influencing those deployed by others. Action depends upon the capability of the individual to ‘make a difference’ to a pre-existing state of affairs or course of events. An agent ceases to be such if he or she loses the capability to ‘make a difference’, that is, to exercise some sort of power.

He goes on to explain, the main aspects of agency are that a person has a choice, he or she could have acted differently and secondly, this person is conscious of what he or she has done, what he describes as ‘reflexive monitoring’ (Redmond, 2009). Elaborating upon this ‘consciousness’, he affirms, “To be a human being is to be a purposeful agent who both has reasons for his or her activities and is able, if asked, to elaborate discursively upon those reasons (including lying about them)” (1984, p.3). Giddens proposes a rapport of duality to understand the relationships between such agents and the forces structuring their lives; each closely interconnected instead of “two independently given sets of phenomena” (1984, p.25). He contends, whilst structure constrains individuals, at the same time it cannot exist without them (1984). Through one’s (re)production of social actions, drawing on the “rules and resources” of a social system, i.e. structure, he or she at the same time reproduces this system (1984, p.19). He concludes therefore, that structure should not solely be associated with constraints but at the same time enables through the various mediums – rules and resources – it establishes. Such a rapport, he suggests, creates “regularised relations of autonomy and dependence” (1984, p.16). As we will see, such an approach is crucial for being able to understand how the everyday challenges young people face in Dzaleka are both constraining and enabling – thinning and thickening – their capacity to deploy a range of ‘causal powers’.
Methodology

Having outlined the study’s analytical approach, this penultimate section can now discuss the research design and the methods chosen to gather empirical data whilst shedding light on how this data is used in analytical chapters. Defined as “a set of procedures, practices and principles for obtaining knowledge about the world”, incorporating data collection methods, planning, analysis and dissemination (Gallagher, 2009, p.66), the methodology that follows aims to respond to the study’s research question.

Gaining access to Dzaleka involved obtaining approval from Malawi’s Ministry of Homeland Security (MHS), negotiating ethical clearance with the National Committee on Research in the Social Sciences and Humanities (NCRSH) and contacting the UNHCR office in Malawi to inform them of my stay. The latter of which not essential as the MHS has legal jurisdiction over Dzaleka but was done so the UNHCR was aware of my presence and to build potential networks. Whilst academics suggest partnering with Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs) can assist researchers to overcome spatial and temporal control mechanisms of camps (Vogler, 2007), Dzaleka a relatively peaceful camp, yet to receive levels of securitisation others in the region have, means researchers move freely and unaccompanied. As such, and employing an approach adopted by Turner (2001) and Jansen (2011), aware of unequal relationships between those living in camps and those governing them, I initially sought to place myself outside the humanitarian sphere, managing early perceptions of me.5

Nonetheless, arriving, knowing no one, and told by the Camp Manager, “people will not just talk to an outsider”, I approached the NGO, ‘There is Hope’ (TiH), who agreed to an informal collaboration, providing a workspace in exchange for helping with their projects.6 Located 100 metres outside Dzaleka and thus putting physical distance between my two roles,7 TiH was founded by a Burundian refugee, providing educational and business development short courses to refugees and Malawians living nearby. This partnership was particularly fruitful early on as the young people I met at TiH, those volunteering there or enrolled in courses, introduced me to the camp and their peers. Whilst aware such an arrangement might impact how young people would interact with me knowing I was connected to an NGO offering sought after vocational classes, I soon realised it was instead, my perceived position as a ‘rich’ mzungo outsider that more often shaped the nature of my relationships with people, rather than my relatively small for TiH.

5 Despite repeating I was a mwanafunzi (student), maintaining this distance was difficult as people would automatically assume this mzungo (white person) was working for a humanitarian organisation.
6 Tasks included writing funding proposals and working on the curriculum for a new ‘Leadership’ short course.
7 This is not to say I mislead participants. I began interviews by explaining that I assisted TiH but that these discussions and the reason I was in Dzaleka was predominantly for my own research.
Though initially seeking to split the week between sleeping in Dzaleka and Lilongwe to allow time for writing up fieldnotes, and while this worked well for some time, I soon found my host family in the camp – the family of a TiH Burundian volunteer – were often targets of ethnically motivated violence. Gradually feeling insecure sleeping in Dzaleka, a typical day saw me arriving in the camp at 8am and driving back to Lilongwe around 6pm, varying the days writing fieldnotes. Not living in Dzaleka could be argued to have limited my ability to develop a ‘full’ (Turner, 2008) picture of young people’s experiences. Yet, even when sleeping in Dzaleka I was often advised not to move around when it got dark anyway. Therefore, I do not feel the quality of the research was reduced by making these journeys each day and the lifts I gave to Malawian TiH employees enlightened me on broader sentiments towards refugees in Malawi.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>MALAWI</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Phase 1:</strong> Exploratory phase, build rapport, locate participants for phase 2, ask permission from community leaders, interview CBO and NGO personnel</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Participant Observation</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Figure 1: Timetable for Fieldwork**

**Phase 1: Exploratory Phase**

Whilst fieldwork evolved more organically, the three phases outlined in Figure 1 were used to guide data collection. Dzaleka is a relatively under-researched camp, and as such an initial exploratory phase was crucial to develop my understanding of the projects, policies, institutions and dynamics, structuring time and space there. Semi-structured interviews (SSIs) took place with employees of implementing partners: with Jesuit Refugee Service (JRS), their Arrupe Skills Centre and their Psychosocial department, Weltthungerhilfe (WHH), Plan International and CARD Malawi. Questions explored their projects, whether these were aimed at young people and perceptions of such individuals. Similar questions were posed to Community Based Organisations (CBOs), smaller refugee-led organisations mirroring the purpose and structures of larger NGOs, yet, lacking resources these are comparatively limited in their capacities. An email interview was conducted with the UNHCR office in Lilongwe to shed light on broader policies governing Dzaleka. The data gathered, although arguably an adult-centric view of the camp, provided a solid grounding for future conversations with young people, particularly regarding their thoughts on the forces attempting to structure their lives.8

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8 This is not to say young people are outside such structures, many volunteering for CBOs and NGOs.
Figure 2 outlines with whom SSIs were conducted, interview guides included in Appendix I. Participants were located through convenience sampling, the main criteria being that they ran or worked for an organisation operating in Dzaleka and were willing to speak with me.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Implementing Partners</th>
<th>5</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>CBOs</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Community Leaders</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UNHCR representative</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Figure 2: Semi-structured interviews conducted in Phase 1

Furthermore, knowledge in this phase was also generated through UNHCR publications, their Malawi Country Operation Plans (COPs) from 2002 to 2020, their end of year reports and quadrennial periodical reviews, as well as government reports on Dzaleka and NGO publications, such as the World Food Project (WFP). The UNHCR, WFP and Government of Malawi, co-produced ‘Joint Assessment Mission’ reports of 2012 and 2014, outlining the situation, needs, risks, capacities, and vulnerabilities of camp inhabitants were also examined to reveal past and current interventions. Such documents were analysed as they were collected and used to outline the context of Malawi and Dzaleka discussed in the following chapter.

An equally important goal of this phase was to find young people to participate in the second phase. Initial introductions were enabled through TiH or by meeting young people at chance whilst walking around the camp and by frequenting ‘Mama Gasa’s’, a small restaurant in the centre of Dzaleka where I could eat lunch next to different young people each day. Following these early meetings, I employed a snowball sampling technique to increase the number of young people participating in the study. Hanging out, but not conducting interviews for the first two months enabled me to build rapport and manage perceptions. As Tickle (2017, p.71) advocates, “time and dedication” must be devoted to building relationships when conducting research with young people to develop a sufficient level of trust, enabling stories to be shared.

Finally, although I gained access from ‘above’, from those officially governing the camp, it was also essential to negotiate access from ‘below’. Introduced to me by the camp manager, in these first two months I arranged meetings with community leaders from DRC, Burundi, Rwanda and Somalia to explain why I was there, ask permission to speak with their people and explore their thoughts of young people in Dzaleka. Yet, for many, especially young people with whom I would later speak, such leaders do not always represent ‘their people’ and ultimately, the most important permission needed was from young people themselves, the ultimate gatekeepers to their worlds (Davis, 1998).
Phase 2: Walking, drawing, and sitting with young people

Having built my understanding of Dzaleka and learnt more about how others perceive young people living there, the aim of the second and third phase was to shed light on how young people make sense of this environment. To do so, the experiences and narratives of 40 young people were sought by employing a mixture of ambulatory and creative research methods. As Figure 3 shows, I aimed for representative numbers of each nationality proportional to their overall numbers. Equal representation was also aimed for regarding gender, yet, in the end, slightly more boys participated due to the relatively greater ease with which I (male) could approach such individuals. No age limits were set, ensuring fluid local interpretations of youth, but the snowball sampling technique meant participants shared similar ages. Approaching young people as a heterogenous group, not only was it important to consider nationality and gender, but due to their ability to impact one’s experience of encampment, other factors were taken into account including, time spent in Dzaleka, born there or arriving more recently, previous experience of camps, living alone or with family, marriage status, and having children. Interviews did take place with other young people and at times, this further data is explored to expand discussions.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Country</th>
<th>Male</th>
<th>Female</th>
<th>Total</th>
<th>Average Age</th>
<th>Nationality’s population in Dzaleka (proportion)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>DRC</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>61%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Burundi</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>23%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rwanda</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>10</td>
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<td>15%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Somalia</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>&lt;1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>51,415</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Figure 3: Youth participants’ Country of Origin, Gender, and Average Age

To understand what meanings young people give to their experiences of Dzaleka and how they enact wainthood there, a toolbox approach (Tisdall, 2008; Warr et al., 2016) was adopted, composed of walking interviews, drawing exercises and traditional SSIs, each method aiming to explore the data gathered from that used prior. Although an order of use was preferred, participant choice was key. Adopting this approach, a degree of flexibility and adaptability was ensured, and the research could accommodate itself to young people’s preferences. Academics including Atkinson (2007) and Thoresen et al., (2016) who conduct research with young refugees, contend they must be provided with alternative mediums through which to express opinions, encouraging them to feel part of the research. Figure 4 reveals how choices varied as to which method young people preferred. In Appendix II I provide the question guides and prompts employed for each of these methods. Although some questions were prepared, stemming from the inductive nature of the enquiry the SSI question guide was largely the product of a fluid process, shaped by what people found important and interesting. Moreover,
admitting the researcher’s relative inexperience in employing ambulatory and visual methods, it should be noted that the process was a learning curve for all and the activities taking place later were conducted with greater clarity and guidance, due in no small part to the constructive feedback given by earlier participants.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Walk and Talk</th>
<th>21</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Draw the Walk</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Map-Making</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SSI</td>
<td>31</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Figure 4: Methods employed with young people in Phase 2

Walking as a method had been employed in the first phase to, “observe and be observed”, to seem approachable and build rapport (Atkinson, 2007, p.32), but also to ground myself in place, to “observe spatial practices in situ” (Kusenbach, 2003, p.463). Yet, shifting to the second phase and needing to understand young people’s rapport with people and place and acknowledging that such relationships are arguably acted out through walking (Anderson & Jones, 2009; Bates & Rhys-Taylor, 2017) it was clear that such a method would still be relevant. Refraining from repeating information provided by Clark and Emmel (2010) in their toolkit for walking interviews, where the process followed is articulately explained, walks were participant-led, I was taken wherever the young person decided, for as long as they wanted, and with their permission, were recorded for later analysis. Some lasted half an hour, but most an hour. A few entered participant’s or friends’ houses, whilst others avoided this. My role was to observe and ask explanations on all I saw (Bernard, 2011), whilst bearing in mind that watching and listening was as paramount as questioning (Betts et al., 2016). Most took place individually, but on one occasion a girl brought her friend along to manage perceptions.

Numerous studies have employed ambulatory methods, ‘transect walks’ or ‘go-along methods’, in settings of encampment (Baker, 2011; Betts et al., 2016; Johanne & Alex, 2017; UNHCR, WFP, & Government of Malawi, 2014) and their utility widely acknowledged for placing researchers in participants’ footsteps (Anderson, 2004; Bates & Rhys-Taylor, 2017; Clark, 2017; Ingold, 2004; Kusenbach, 2003; Lee & Ingold, 2006; Pink, 2008; Thrift, 2006; Vannini & Vannini, 2017). Reflecting upon this method, whose purpose was to contextualise and ground the ensuing data collection activities, two benefits stand out. The first was the ease it fostered for communicating with relatively new acquaintances. Not needing the constant eye contact inevitable in seated interviews, rapport could develop comfortably, assisted by the “sociability of walking” and what people share (Lee & Ingold, 2006); rhythms of walking and a plethora of sensorial inputs. Leading to the second benefit, that it provided a strong basis for understanding how the other gives meaning to time and space, grounding
stories and narratives fleshed out later. Arriving somewhere, by chance or on purpose, a site would invoke memories and a story unfold. For example, reaching a borehole, Patrick, a 20-year-old Rwandan, explained, growing up he often collected water here, filling jerry cans and putting them on his bike. Seeing this as an ‘adult’ role for its physicality, he remarked, “this is where I got my manhood”, this symbolised his transition out of childhood. Suggesting, when walking, one learns “roots not routes”, more than the path taken, but individual experiences, memories and spatial histories (Clark & Emmel, 2010). As several participants would later reflect, such memories would not have surfaced out of situ.

It should be noted, walking with a researcher is clearly not as ‘natural’ as the movement and interactions that would normally unfold, and this must be considered when analysing the data. Nonetheless, as an initial method, to build rapport and (re)generate memories to be explored through subsequent methods, it proved a productive and enjoyable activity for all involved.

After walking I proposed a drawing exercise whereby the participant drew the walk then explained what he or she had drawn, followed by my own questions about the two exercises. For those who had not wanted to walk, predominantly female participants, I suggested a map-making exercise following a similar process. For those who preferred neither, we went straight to a SSI. It should be noted, although many young people were willing to show me their camp on foot, several were less keen to draw. Nevertheless, those who were were given A3 paper, pens, and completed the task in their own time, to be explored another day, either at the participant’s home or in a side room of the JRS library to afford privacy. Participants conducted the first step of analysis through their annotations and subsequent explanations; essential for reinforcing ownership (Radley et al., 2005), overcoming my potential misinterpretations (Literat, 2013) and maintaining distance between the empirical data and the researcher’s “subjective standpoint” (Bland, 2012). The participant’s explanation and ensuing discussion typically lasted for an hour and were recorded with permission, to be transcribed later.

The effectiveness of visual methods has been highlighted by numerous academics (see Clark, 2011; Cox et al., 2014; Literat, 2013; Rose, 2001; Warr et al., 2016; Young & Barrett, 2001) who contend they can be implemented with ease, fostering relaxed atmospheres (Yuen, 2004), provide fun mediums to communicate though (Mand, 2012), provide greater time for turning internal realities into visual metaphors (Literat, 2013) and reduce the likelihood for influencing response compared to SSIs (Thoresen et al., 2016). Placing the pencil in the hand of the participant – although such concepts should be problematised – these methods are argued to strengthen agency, empower participants (Davis, 1998; Literat, 2013; Singhal & Rattine-Flaherty, 2006; Thoresen et al., 2016) and confront unequal power dynamics, especially with young people (Lange & Mierendorff, 2009; Mitchell et al., 2017).
Drawing the walk and map-making were included based on such discussions and reflecting on their use it was clear that having methods which overcame constraints of literacy and language was crucial given a context where educational levels and language abilities, disrupted by displacement, widely differ. Yet, this method was primarily chosen for its ability to respond to the research question, for shedding light on the meaning one gives to their lived environment. Gadamer (1975, paraphrased in Thoresen et al., 2016, p.431) argues art plays a key role in, “conceptualising, creating illustrations or elucidating human experience”; providing a “full picture” of a heterogeneous phenomenon (Cahnmann-Taylor & Siegesmund, 2008, p.4). Such ‘fullness’ is exemplified in a picture’s capacity to reveal relationships between visual elements that text based or spoken methods cannot and contrasted with these which are constrained by linearity, visual methods enable “holistic representations of concepts, emotions and information without the need to prioritise things in time” (Literat, 2013, p.87).

Such drawings are included throughout the thesis to build narratives and map the experiences shared by young people and are useful for revealing a sense of place less visible through other methods. Yet, whilst such outputs are, at times, analysed in their own right, it emerged that their most useful role, like the walks, was to ground young people’s stories and stimulate the conversations that followed. Moreover, perhaps a method better suited to younger people, it remains that less participants opted for this method and SSIs often proceeded walks.
Whilst interviews with NGOs, CBOs and community leaders took place in English, not wanting language to be a qualifier for participation, an interpreter was sought for phase two. Introduced to me by JRS, Nelson, 30 years old and Congolese, arrived in Dzaleka five years ago, now living with his wife and new-born son. With a degree in Psychology and able to speak the main languages of the camp, Swahili, French, and English fluently, Nelson had been volunteering with the psychosocial team for two years when he agreed to interpret for this study. Through his JRS role, Nelson knew many young people, this enabled the study to reach individuals it might not have been able to access otherwise, those involved with drugs, alcohol abuse and sex work. Moreover, Nelson, an ‘insider’, through his introduction could help break down perceptions of me as an unknown, white, outsider. Nonetheless, himself a volunteer and I a mzungo, it was clear we were still to be positioned within the humanitarian sphere and hence, with something to give; inevitably “shaping the nature of the knowledge produced” (Ansell et al., 2012, p.180). Thus, we made it paramount at the beginning of interviews to clearly delineate the purpose of the study, our roles in it and what it could and could not achieve. That said, perceptions were perhaps reinforced when, with guidance from Nelson and aware that exercises may be keeping people from income-generating activities, I decided to compensate individuals by inviting them to lunch or giving basic necessities, including soap and sugar. Although perhaps building the image I was trying to avoid, clearly the data gathered was crucial for completing fieldwork and these small tokens were the very least I could do. I am aware that when using an interpreter, a degree of meaning is always lost and this is a risk that must be considered. However, the added benefit to the research of including and understanding a broader spectrum of voices outweighed this inevitable drawback.

**Phase 3: Building young peoples’ perspectives**

Having completed numerous walks, discussed several drawings, and learnt more about young people’s experience of encampment, a brief pause was had for preliminary analysis of the data produced thus far. This enabled me to see what further information was required to respond fully to the research question, from whom this was needed and which topics could be interesting to expand upon. What unfolded in the third and final phase were secondary ‘follow-up’ interviews with young people and understanding it would be useful to triangulate sources, interviews took place with elder people in Dzaleka and young Malawians in Lilongwe; the data

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9 Aware of the important critical body of literature drawing attention to the overlooked work of research assistants, particularly in refugee studies (see Sukarieh & Tannock, 2019), it should be clarified that Nelson’s dual roles in this study were as interpreter, for participants who did not speak English, and as gatekeeper, locating young people I would have been unable to meet otherwise. Whilst his interpretation could be argued to be the first step in data analysis and although our discussions following interviews were useful for learning more about some of the topics raised, in-depth analysis and the development of themes was conducted by myself.

10 A point to which I return in later discussions.

11 Something arguably reduced through a choice of methods less dependent on ‘direct’ discussion.
from these used to build further perceptions of ‘youth’. Yet, due to limitations of time, interviews were only had with six elder people and three Malawians. The UNHCR Chief Protection Officer was also interviewed, but this was to learn more about the implementation of the CRRF in Malawi, grounding potential future research into the lives of young people in Dzaleka before and after its implementation. The question guides for all these interviews are in Appendix III.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Interview Type</th>
<th>Number</th>
</tr>
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<tr>
<td>Young people in the Dzaleka</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Elder people</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UNHCR Chief Protection Officer</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Young Malawians</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Figure 6: Semi-structured interviews conducted in Phase 3

**Ethics and Positionality**

To conclude fieldwork, a workshop was held to thank participants for their continued participation, to explain the research once again and briefly highlight the findings so far. Not only was this essential from an ethical standpoint, attempting to ensure participants fully understood the research, what it may or may not achieve and what would happen next; but, in providing a chance for feedback, it was crucial for ensuring the researcher’s interpretation of the data aligned as closely as possible with that of those whose lives the study explores (see Van Blerk & Ansell, 2007). Whilst not all 40 young people attended, and although discussions were dominated by a small minority, the comments of agreement and suggestions for further consideration were useful for reinforcing and guiding later analysis. Yet, reflecting upon this process, and something also building out of data-gathering activities, I could not help feeling that ‘talk’ and recommendations, the (short-term) output of the workshop and study in general, were insufficient for many of these young people.

At the beginning of fieldwork one female participant remarked, “People won’t talk to foreigners because they may think you will just take their story”. Reflecting upon her comment, it is clear my positionality as an outsider – a ‘foreigner’ – is being affirmed, but what also stands out is my somewhat privileged – professional and personal – position as someone who can ‘just’ come and ‘take’ people’s stories; drawing attention to the numerous times those in contexts of humanitarian interventions are asked to give their stories to people who are never seen or

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12 A privileged position, I must acknowledge, that did assist the study to navigate the camp. For example, through my ability to secure an informal affiliation with ‘There is Hope’, an NGO pleased to have a PhD researcher from a UK based university, and secondly, in the way I was able to obtain meetings with important figures in the camp such as the camp manager, despite the long queues often visible outside these offices. Actions that no doubt reinforced “colonial dynamics in development research” (Le Bourdon, 2022, p.7).
heard from again (Mackenzie et al., 2007). A point also alluding to the unequal rapport existing between myself and participants who I was asking to open up and speak about their lives in exchange for me sharing relatively little about myself.

Given my positionality as white, male, middle-class and European, but driven by the urge not to be seen as just another ‘foreigner’ passing through the camp, the research took a number of steps – building rapport, adopting participatory and interesting research methods, providing chances for feedback and aiming for ‘transparency’ (see Caitlin, 2007, p. 302) through clear and repeated explanations of the study’s goal and potential impacts – to confront this well-founded concern. Moreover, I believe that sharing the generational stage of ‘youth’ with participants helped to develop some sense of trust and rapport. Clearly on-going participation was voluntary, and positive feedback was given, young people sharing they had learnt new things about themselves, often adding the creative methods were enjoyable, thus, something was hopefully gained in the short-term from the study. Nonetheless, a question often asked at the end of interviews was, “how will this research actually help young people in the camp?”, reminding me of the tangible changes young people understandably wanted to see in their lives.

I am unsure the extent to which my response alleviated young peoples’ concerns. I replied that the study could assist other academics or policy makers and practitioners in their work with young people in camps, and my own future work on the topic. But explained that in reality, visible and short-term change is difficult to achieve from research, especially at this level, adding, whilst “this study may not directly change your lives, it has the potential for assisting other young people in some years to come and maybe those in other settings of encampment”. It is hoped that through the dissemination of findings, accompanied by recommendations, to NGOs, the UNHCR, the Camp Manager and government bodies responsible for Dzaleka, that some degree of ‘impact’ may be achieved. Though, ultimately, as a supervisor shared, assessing this is tough, but being honest and kind is important, as is having confidence in your own ability to re-tell and interpret these stories and experiences in a respectful way, and it is to this standard I aim to hold the chapters that follow.

Structure of thesis

The first of which briefly describes the setting of Dzaleka refugee camp in Malawi, contextualising later discussions whilst at the same time contributing to increasing knowledge of this under-researched and relatively unknown camp.

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13 Also navigating the multifaceted, socially influenced and personally defined journey in adulthood.
Aligning with existing studies, whilst contributing to them through a youth perspective(s), Chapter 2 explores the dominant narrative of challenge and constraint employed by all young people participating in the study. Looking to transition into adulthood, young people found “another side of life” in Dzaleka, a place where they have “nothing to do”, “no choice”, and where they go forward “blindly” as a result, unable to achieve their aspirations for the future. Moreover, expanding existing depictions of camps as places of contradictions, the chapter goes on to reveal how these individuals, at the same time, see Dzaleka as a “bridge”, a temporary place of transit that will one day, through resettlement, take them to the “good life”.

Reinforcing the contradictory nature of the camp, young people also describe Dzaleka as a “school” or “teacher” and Chapter 3 sheds light on a narrative of (informal) learning that in many ways emerges out of the one discussed prior. I argue that although the narrative of constraint may imply a more ‘deficient’ experience of waithood, young people are not passive in this, but are actively learning to “struggle”, “survive” and “cope” with the context of constraint, developing resilience and thus, supporting a more productive or dynamic view of waithood. Understood in a broader sense of the term, learning that transpires beyond the classroom, young people show how, through their relationships with people and place, they have learnt to cope with the challenges they confront in the camp. The emic notion of “keeping busy” introduced there to reveal how young people are coping with such constraints, and in doing so, contributing to studies of waithood by exploring its enactment by young people in encampment.

With these initial two narratives in mind, the final analytical chapters flesh out young people’s overarching experience of encampment as waiting. The first, Chapter 4, sheds light on a group of young people for whom the narrative of constraint (Chapter 2) holds greater weight, Dzaleka is a place from which they are waiting to leave in order to move forwards with their lives. Physical and social (inter-generational) mobility are aligned, and they believe they cannot escape waithood – take on roles and responsibilities associated with social adulthood – until they have left the camp. These young people, mostly Congolese and arriving more recently, accept the constraints of this place, understand others are in control of their future and that they cannot become ‘someone’ in Dzaleka, so see they must be patient until they receive the UNHCR’s decision. Yet, as expressed in the previous narrative, these young people are not passive in their waiting, I explore their expressions of agency through the etic concept of ‘getting by’, seeing how they are coping with ‘place’ and ‘time’ until they leave. I reveal waithood is nuanced for these young people as the camp appears to be a place where they can wait for a solution to come. I conclude by (re)affirming the camp as a place of contradiction, as, although they employ a narrative of stuckness, through the ways these young people cope
or ‘get by’ they develop characteristics of adulthood and are therefore nevertheless partially transitioning.

Chapter 5 shifts to a further group of young people, predominantly, but not limited to, those who have spent more years in Dzaleka, who share an alternative portrayal of the camp. For these individuals, although also waiting to leave and acknowledging constraints, they have understood this double-edged sword and the issues with waiting for resettlement to move forwards with their lives. I argue – building upon Jansen’s (2016) study – these young people see Dzaleka, this “bridge”, as a nodal point on which they are building their lives for an unknown destination and duration. I explore the ways and reasons they are “keeping busy” through the etic concept of ‘getting out’ to reveal how they are taking steps to “be someone”, to ‘get out’ of waithood and enact ‘youth’ as it ‘should’ be experienced, a time of becoming. I reveal how these young people are taking such steps through the formal learning opportunities the camp provides, but also the importance they place on “making sense” where you are.

Having shared the main findings of the research, the final chapter concludes the thesis and reflects upon some of the core themes running through these discussions, before highlighting some thoughts for policy and returning to the aforementioned ethical concerns remaining at the end of the process.
Chapter 1: Entering Dzaleka

Unlike camps in other Sub-Saharan African countries like Uganda, Kenya, or Tanzania, Dzaleka, in the Central Region of Malawi is a relatively under-researched context of encampment. Whilst limited numbers of studies have employed this case study, these are keen to stress the lacuna of research exploring this setting.\textsuperscript{14} Such sources highlight not only the camp’s discursive absence in academia, due to its comparatively small size and lack of ‘CNN effect’, but also its absence domestically, emblematic in the camp’s cartographic invisibility (Baker, 2011; Donald, 2014; Makhumula, 2019). Donald (2014) argues these omissions nationally and beyond have led to the marginalisation of those living there and their voices silenced. A characteristic with nuanced meaning in this camp, a place with a “history of secrecy” (Baker, 2011) from its early roots as a prison for political inmates. Despite this neglect, Dzaleka’s longevity, its expanding borders and its ever-growing population’s protracting displacement, in combination with its resemblance less as a camp and more as just another Malawian town where ‘normal’ life continues to unfold, position Dzaleka as a permanent feature of Malawi’s landscape. Something entrenched (and blurred) by the degree to which those in Dzaleka have integrated into Malawian society over the years and that to which Malawians are also present in camp life.

Nonetheless, it remains that such permanence is precarious, refugee status hard-achieved, and the temporary nature of the camp re-affirmed in government announcements concerning its ever-impeding closure and relocation north; Donald’s (2014, p.42) description of Dzaleka as a site of “permanent temporariness” thus providing an acute understanding of this context, aligning it with other studies that discuss the “permanent impermanence” (Brun, 2015) of displacement. It is within such a context that we must approach young people’s experiences of Dzaleka, engaging with these tensions structuring their lives. Looking to the future, something of great importance for these individuals, we find this temporary perception is heightened by young people’s aspirations for resettlement. Dzaleka, in young people’s own words, emerging as a temporary ‘bridge’, a place of waiting to move forwards with their lives. Whilst the ensuing chapters attempt to understand such perceptions, and explore different temporal and spatial experiences of waiting, it is important, and the goal of this chapter, to briefly contextualise their lived environment in Dzaleka and in doing so contribute to providing

\textsuperscript{14} Recent studies are dominated by university theses including, Carlson’s (2005) work on domestic work and the patriarchy in Dzaleka, Velasquez (2006) who evaluates intracommunal conflict in the camp, Chinangwa (2007) who explores the legality of Malawi’s reservations to the 1951 Convention, Donald (2014) who examines access to higher education in Dzaleka, Sievert (2016) who sheds light on the ‘double exile’ experienced by Rwandan Hutus and most recently, Msowaya (2019) who uses the case study of Dzaleka to analyse the economic contribution that refugees make to local economies. Peer reviewed articles have been written by Baker (2011) and Makhumula (2019). With the exception of Donald’s thesis, these are predominantly adult-centric studies but are nonetheless returned to throughout the thesis to build discussions.
updated knowledge on the camp. To do so, I begin by exploring young people’s thoughts of Malawi, then discuss the arrival and governmental response to displaced persons in the country over the years, before entering Dzaleka and providing an initial description of the camp, the structures and institutions operating there.

“The warm heart of Africa”

To ground this chapter and locate Dzaleka in its broader geographical context, it is interesting to firstly consider some of the thoughts young people who participated in this study held of Malawi before arriving. Highlighting the lack of knowledge about this setting, whilst some were simply too young to know Malawi or Dzaleka, just following their parents, many of those who arrived more recently, often alone, explain they had known relatively little about the country or the camp. Whilst a few had been told by friends or relatives they could be “helped” – alluding to the learning opportunities in Dzaleka and crucially, the opportunity for resettlement – many, echoing comments made by elder people, suggest they hadn’t heard much of Malawi before fleeing. Young people’s multifaceted reasons for arriving in Malawi are explored elsewhere, yet, what several did know, or had learnt in other camps and along their journeys, was that Malawi is peaceful. Referring to the lack of previous armed conflict, this is also due to Malawi’s physical distance from where these young people had fled. A dominant story shared by many who initially sought refuge in Zambia or Tanzania for example, tells how, “my troubles followed me there” and “insecurity remained”, in addition to Tanzania being a place where “everyone is immigration police”, and thus, the only choice was to keep moving and Malawi was seen as “far enough from these people”.

Clearly, on arrival and since then young people’s thoughts of their new environment have developed and these form the greater focus of this thesis. Amongst other experiences, the degree to which this “help” has emerged varies for different young people and the safety hoped for has not materialised for all, ethnic discrimination against Burundian and Rwandan Tutsi minorities pervading the camp (Sievert, 2016). Before exploring the history of refugees in Malawi, it is important to briefly highlight one further characteristic of this setting. Looking to the future and responding to whether she would consider staying to live in Malawi, a Congolese girl explained to me one day:

“It is peaceful, but I can't live here, there are no opportunities for self-development. Even Malawians are suffering in villages nearby, they come looking for work… to help people here”

The blurred divide between the camp and its surroundings, between ‘refugee’ and ‘citizen’, is visible throughout the thesis; but is something that stands out clearly in the number of Malawians present in Dzaleka daily. Such individuals head to “town”, as many say, searching
for work – men selling charcoal and bricks, women cleaning houses or carrying food distributions, and elderly women begging – but also as beneficiaries of humanitarian projects. Whilst it is noted that those in camps can in fact be better off than some in the host community (Cole, 2018), migration only for those who can afford it (McKenzie, 2017; Van Hear et al., 2012) and studies documented the economic benefits camps can bring to their surroundings (Loschmann et al., 2019), approaching Dzaleka, one should also bear in mind its geographical location in a country with serious food, economic and environmental insecurities.

The Government of Malawi’s 2018 ‘Vulnerability Assessment Committee’ report concludes, poverty is a fundamental concern, 51.54% of the population below the national poverty line, 20.1% ‘ultra-poor’ (GoM, 2018). The report states 2.2 million people faced emergency levels of food insecurity in 2018, with numbers predicted to rise to 3.3 million in 2019. This is combined with a high population growth rate, which grew exponentially from 1901 to 2008, and an age expectancy of 54 (IOM, 2015), producing a large young population in Malawi; mirroring the camp. Such issues are augmented by environmental insecurities with repeated floods and droughts, including Cyclone Idai in 2019, that have a considerable impact on a population, two thirds of which with livelihoods driven by agricultural production (IMF, 2017).

Yet, such conditions have permeated Malawian society for much of its post-independence history, culminating in economic crisis at the end of 1970s – shared by many countries in the region – and the ensuing failure of the structural adjustment policies in the 1980s deteriorating the situation, all contributing to the eventual end of one-party rule in 1994 (Conroy, 2006). Nonetheless, throughout this period, from the mid-1980s onwards, Malawi lived up to its name as the warm heart of Africa and welcomed those seeking asylum.

**Refugees in Malawi 1980s to 1993**

Whilst Dzaleka was opened in 1994 by the UNHCR to deal with an influx of displaced peoples from the Great Lakes region of Sub-Saharan Africa and the Horn of Africa, Malawi had been a refugee receiving country for many years prior. In 1985, fleeing Civil War, large numbers of Mozambicans began arriving, reaching 15% of Malawi’s population in the early 1990s (Zetter, 1996). After largescale repatriation in 1993 and more recent arrivals being repatriated from Luwani camp in the south – closed in 2018 – the current number of displaced Mozambicans in Malawi has decreased. Roger Zetter (1995; 1996) provides the seminal work on early displaced peoples in Malawi and he identifies a shift in the government’s response from 1985 to 1993. Years associated with the arrival of Mozambicans, their gradual voluntary repatriation, and the arrival of new groups from Rwanda, Burundi, DRC and to a lesser extent, Eritrea, Ethiopia, Sudan, and Somalia. I will briefly outline this shift before expanding the timeframe to reveal how these years set the foundations of Malawi’s current refugee response.
Zetter (1995) describes this shift as one from an initial government controlled and led response, limiting external mandates and influence, towards a more open approach, allowing, reluctantly, the management of refugees and asylum seekers to be controlled by the UNHCR and foreign NGOs. Coinciding with this was a change from a permissive settlement approach, enabling the displaced to settle where they wanted, to the UNHCR favoured encampment policy that established Luwani and Dzaleka; a transition shared by other refugee receiving countries in the region (Callamard, 1994; Nindi, 1986). He breaks this shift into three phases.

The first, from 1984 to 1986, saw the arrival of Mozambicans in Malawi. During these years, Zetter contends the government, drawing on historical narratives of fluid cross-border movements and common ethnic, linguistic, and cultural backgrounds, encouraged self-settlement. Opting for a centralised ‘Integrated Development Approach’ and assisted by local community organisations, the government focussed on projects that would bring combined long term benefits to the displaced and host population, preventing need for external intervention (Zetter, 1995). Crucial for limiting the potential scrutiny outside NGOs might have brought to the internal politics of Banda’s autocratic regime. However, as the years passed, more Mozambicans arrived, Malawi’s national food security situation deteriorated, and the government was forced to open up. Zetter (1995) states this begun the institutionalisation of Malawi’s refugee program, the government maintaining centralised control, running interventions through government ministries, but now including external NGOs under these.

The second phase from 1987 to 1989 saw an increase of Mozambicans, greater food shortages in the country and the emergence of non-official camps. Compelled to ratify the ‘1951 Convention relating to the Status of Refugees’ (the 1951 Convention) in 1987, in exchange for continued humanitarian assistance, the government formed a joint operational partnership with the UNHCR, despite maintaining overall control and strictly monitoring external NGOs (Zetter, 1995). It is here we begin to see a clash between governmental policy of self-settlement, group-based identification of refugee status and developmental approach, with UNHCR’s relief and encampment goals (Callamard, 1994). With worsening food insecurity, the government found it increasingly difficult to feed its own people, and a final phase emerged where the government relinquished its monopoly of power to the UNHCR who began coordinating Malawi’s refugee response (Zetter, 1995). From 1989 to 1992, government capacities deteriorated, external NGOs grew in power, competing and replicating projects, and resulting in a complex situation even the UNHCR found difficult to coordinate. Zetter (1995) concludes his analysis with the mass voluntary repatriation of Mozambicans in 1993, calming this competitive institutional environment, and the product of these years being the establishment of a ‘normal’ refugee system based on encampment, replacing Malawi’s earlier integrated, development approach.
Malawi’s developing refugee policy

Thus, out of these early years emerged Malawi’s current approach towards those seeking asylum. Due to large influxes of Mozambicans, in 1987 the government ratified the 1951 Declaration, its 1967 additional protocols and the Organisation for African Unity’s (OAU) ‘1969 Convention governing the Specific Aspects of Refugee Problems in Africa’. Lacking a national policy framework, the government created its own ‘Refugee Act’ in 1989, still operational today. The government’s early permissive stance, seen in its open borders and self-settlement approach is visible in this. Broad interpretations of ‘refugee’, open, group based determination procedures of acquiring refugee status and a commitment to ‘non refoulement’; conceptualisations, Maluwa (1991) contends, show Malawi as progressive compared with other refugee receiving states. UNHCR’s ‘Country Operation Plan’ (2006) suggests, through these ratifications – Malawi’s Refugee Act, its signing of the 1948 Universal Declaration of Human Rights and the 1966 International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights – their work is greatly facilitated, and such permissive frameworks have been a particular attraction for those seeking asylum.

Yet, Maluwa (1991) affirms such policies should be put in context, Malawi confronting large influxes in a short period, making individual processing unrealistic. Furthermore, like other states, Malawi made several reservations to the 1951 Convention. Including Articles 7 (Exemption from Reciprocity), 13 (Movable and Immovable property), 15 (Right of Association), 19 (Liberal Professions), 22 (Public Education) and 24 (Labour Legislation), but most significantly for young people spoken with, the government limits the right to wage-earning employment (Article 17), freedom of movement and choice of place of residence (Article 34); perhaps attempting to regain control. Although, the government states these are merely recommendations, a 2008 high court ruling that upheld a government order for all those living outside Luwani and Dzaleka to return, re-ordered in April 2021, suggests otherwise.¹⁵

Nonetheless, whilst the recent announcement has been accompanied by greater political and social momentum, until then and throughout fieldwork, such reservations were understood by refugees, UNHCR and the government alike to “exist only on paper” (UNHCR, 2019c). Many Rwandans and Burundians closely integrated into Malawian society, living, working, attending schools and universities in Zomba, Blantyre and Lilongwe; all the while contributing to local economies (Msowoya, 2019). Yet, whilst challenged in practice, the presence of such reservations poses serious challenges to those lacking the social and economic capital needed to leave the camp and this is explored in Chapter 2. For most, arriving at the border,

once ‘processed’ by immigration police, and passing through Karonga transit shelter in the north, are taken to Dzaleka where they are expected to stay (see Figure 7). Before examining those people arriving since 1993, it is worth noting the government’s recent ratification of the 2016 New York Declaration; an approach which aims to return policy to the early days of Mozambican displacement.

![Figure 7: The process for seeking asylum in Malawi](image)

As stated, Malawi’s existing Refugee Act was formed many years ago to confront a particular type of refugee influx (Maluwa, 1991). Since then, complex challenges brought about by new trends in forced displacement and the broader globalised world have emerged. These include mixed flows of people seeking economic opportunities, fleeing violence and persecution, or forced to leave by environmental insecurities. Combined with the emerging gap between policy and practice – visible in the transgression of Malawi’s reservations to the 1951 declaration – it was clear that an updated refugee policy in Malawi was needed. Thus, in 2016, Malawi adopted the New York Declaration before signing the Comprehensive Refugee Response Framework (CRRF) in 2018.
Adopted by all member states of the UN, the declaration demonstrates a shift in global refugee response from one of emergency protection to developing livelihoods and economic solutions (see Grandi, 2019). Its ‘whole of society’ approach, incorporates private and civil society and aims to strengthen self-reliance of refugees and increase burden sharing. Integrating refugees into host communities, it contends they can access new avenues for employment and education whilst contributing to economies. Furthermore, increasing resettlement places, it argues, will ensure responsibility for displaced peoples is shared more equally, reducing the considerable burden often placed on southern countries. This declaration also pushes for the reduced use of encampment, stressing they should be “the exception and to the extent possible, a temporary measure in response to an emergency” (General Assembly, 2016).

During fieldwork, the CRRF had yet to be implemented. Speaking with government employees pushing for its implementation it appears there is much to do in terms of the bureaucratic and legal loopholes needing to be addressed. Moreover, discussing this with Malawian NGO employees in Dzaleka who are advocating for the CRRF suggests the current socio-economic climate in Malawi is not a conducive nor safe time to push for such a policy seen as increasing opportunities for foreigners in the country.

![Figure 8: Map of Malawi with Dzaleka Refugee Camp. Credit: Charlie Rose 2021](image-url)
‘People of Concern’ since 1993

Coinciding with the end of Mozambique’s civil war, in the early 1990s Malawi began to receive large numbers of people fleeing conflict in the Great Lakes and Horn of Africa. Accordingly, Dzaleka was re-opened in 1994. Located 45km from Lilongwe, 20km from the airport and reached by a new tarmacked road completed in 2016, Dzaleka differs from the norm of locating camps in rural, border areas (Camarena, 2017). Moreover, unlike many countries in the region with large populations of displaced peoples, Dzaleka’s current population is just over 50,000 (UNHCR, 2021b). Despite this relatively smaller population, overcrowding is critical. The camp passed its capacity of 10,000 in 2002 (UNHCR, 2019a). Whilst this has had serious health and security implications, for many young people the main impact has been to increase competition for the already limited number of educational and volunteering opportunities available with NGOs. Although the camp’s growing population mirrors others in the region (UNHCR, 2021c) and Malawi’s own rapid growth (World Bank, 2021), this increase is largely a result of the new arrivals who continue to enter Dzaleka each month.

Figure 9: Refugees under UNHCR mandate in Malawi 1993-2021. Source: UNHCR population statistics for Malawi

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16 Terms including ‘people of concern’, ‘refugees’ and ‘asylum seekers’ are used throughout the thesis to make the research applicable to policy. However, aware that such terms are heavily loaded, and with the goal of emphasising that those in Dzaleka are individuals getting on with everyday life, I attempt to limit their use and describe instead the ‘people’ living in Dzaleka.

17 At the end of fieldwork (February, 2020) a new zone ‘Katuza’ (35ha) was being cleared and drainage systems installed, with funding from the Government of Japan, to provide plots for new arrivals, those being relocated for encroaching on water points and public spaces, or those living in collapsing shelters (Email interview, UNHCR); providing plots for 320 families, averaging 5.5 people per family (UNHCR, 2019a). An area west of the camp, ‘Dzaleka Hills’ (58ha), was also being prepared. It awaits to be seen if this expansion will alleviate overcrowding in Dzaleka and as one young person commented, it is not clear whether new schools will accompany this expansion.
Figures 9 and 10 demonstrate how the composition of asylum seekers and refugees in Malawi has shifted over the years, Figure 11 below sheds light on Dzaleka’s current inhabitants. Numbers alone doing little to reveal the social life behind them (Hendriks, forthcoming). Motivations for fleeing cannot be generalised for all those in Dzaleka, nor those from the same country. Therefore, telling the stories behind these numbers, or not, as many choose, is left to participants in due course. What follows here is a brief introduction to the conflicts creating refugee influxes into Malawi the past 20 years, yet, before doing so, it is interesting to draw attention to two characteristics that stand out in these graphs above, shared by these different groups; both returned to in later chapters.
The first has been noted and that is the protracted nature of these displacements. The UNHCR, WFP and the Government of Malawi (2014) ‘Joint Assessment Mission’ (JAM) report remarks how many in Dzaleka have been in exile for over 10 years. Figures that align with global trends in forced displacement where 78% of all refugees were in protracted situations in 2018 (UNHCR, 2019c, p.22). Yet, and perhaps explaining why Dzaleka has received relatively less attention in academia or the media, the label of ‘Protracted Refugee Situations’ requiring 25,000 people or more from the same country to have been in exile for five or more years, has been unable to apply to the relatively smaller numbers there.

A second factor common is a lack of refugee status. Since individual case determination was introduced in 2002, for almost each nationality there are now more people without refugee status than with. In Chapter 4, we examine this social factor for the large impact it has on young people’s lives, especially young Rwandans and Burundians whose chances of receiving status are considered much lower than the Congolese arriving more recently. As that chapter addresses, these high numbers of asylum seekers yet to receive status is in many ways due to the large backlog in MHS’s ‘Refugee Status Determination’ (RSD) unit as a result of not confirming any statuses from 2011 to 2014. However, with the announcement in December 2019 of prima facia refugee status determination for Congolese arrivals from Eastern DRC, North and South Kivu Provinces and the Katanga Region (UNHCR Factsheet Malawi, 2019b) these pressures are expected to ease.

Conflict in the Great Lakes

It is clear that conflicts in the Great Lakes region of Sub-Saharan Africa – in Rwanda, Burundi, and DRC – have inter-connected roots stemming from challenges augmented in the post-colonial periods. Omeje (2013, p.25) accepts there is much diversity amongst such conflicts but argues, whilst some find their origins in pre-colonial “intergroup animosities”, it was colonial policies and politics that entrenched them and since then, the postcolonial elites who have used the unequal and unjust socio-economic and political institutions and structures established by colonial powers to advance their own interests. Adding, due to the “historical and geo-demographic interconnectedness of the people” in this region, based most significantly on the ‘Hutu-Tutsi imbroglio’, these long-lasting conflicts have had broader, regional dimensions. Common characteristics are seen in ethnic differences, their exploitation by political elites, issues of ownership and unequal access to land, competition over natural resources and many more, all in a context of Western states pushing for democratic reform and good governance. It is beyond the scope or aim of this study to conduct in-depth analysis of these conflicts and thus, hereafter I provide a brief overview of each to contextualise the stories we hear in later chapters.
Conflict in Rwanda

As Figure 6 shows, Rwandans dominated Dzaleka’s early inhabitants. Conflict in Rwanda, relevant to this study, emerged after the 1959 revolution that brought Hutu elites to power, overthrowing the Tutsi-led government. Violence continued sporadically in the years that followed, with large numbers of Tutsi fleeing to Uganda and Burundi, culminating in the 1990-1994 Civil War and 1994 Genocide against the Tutsi. A conflict hastened by Tutsi who had found refuge in Uganda in previous years, forming the Rwandan Patriotic Front (RPF). Following the assassination of Hutu president Juvenal Habyarimana in 1994, the Rwandan Genocide ensued killing an estimated 84% of the Tutsi population and many ‘moderate’ Hutu (Verpoorten, 2005). Ending after three months with RPF’s arrival in Kigali and formation of a new government that has held power since. Whilst numerous Tutsi returned to Rwanda, throughout the conflict and after, fearing retaliation, imprisonment, and violence, large numbers of mainly Hutu fled Rwanda (Sommers, 2012). Dzaleka was not the initial destination for many, numerous Rwandans, mostly Hutu, only arriving after the Tanzanian government invoked their cessation clause in 2002, many choosing onwards mobility south over renewed persecution in Rwanda (Sievert, 2016).

Whilst an estimated two million Rwandans fled the conflict, it is thought the majority of these have now returned. In recent years, Rwanda’s President Kagame has called for the return of displaced Rwandans living abroad. In 2013, the UNHCR, in agreement with Kagame, invoked a cessation clause for Rwandan refugees who fled before 1998, stating the reasons leading to their displacement no longer existed and that fundamental and durable changes had taken place in Rwanda. In 2015, the UNHCR in partnership with countries still hosting Rwandans asserted they “would no longer be in a position to operationally support this population after December 2017” (UNHCR, 2015). A decision leaving many with the choice of risking further insecurities in Rwanda, where their land and property have new owners, or remaining where they are and potential becoming stateless (Kingston, 2017).

It is within such a context that many Rwandans in Dzaleka find themselves, experiencing perhaps more than others there the notion of ‘limbo’ that has come to characterise refugees’ lives (Green et al., 2017). A camp rumour, although refuted by Malawi’s UNHCR Protection Officer, suggests Rwandans are less likely to receive refugee status or be chosen for resettlement. Moreover, many young Rwandans contend they are no longer chosen for World University Service of Canada (WUSC) – discussed shortly – since, they argue, Kagame told countries not to allow Rwandans to resettle abroad as their own country was at peace; one boy adding that Kagame especially sees WUSC as a threat for developing an educated generation of youth abroad that may come back to overthrow him one day.
Conflict in Burundi

Figures 6 and 7 reveal there has been a consistent Burundian population in Dzaleka since the early 1990s. Sharing more than a border with Rwanda, the histories of these countries are intimately connected. Following its independence in 1962, a Tutsi government ruled Burundi until 1992 when multi-party elections began. During these years three main events took place causing violence for Burundians. The first in 1965 when an attempted coup d’État against the incumbent Tutsi government took place followed by violent repression of the Hutu majority. Then in 1972 Burundi’s first genocide, as defined by the UN Security Council, broke out against the Hutu population following unrest among educated Hutu. This saw the beginning of large movements of Burundians into DRC, Rwanda, and Tanzania, many of whom said to have gone on to participate in the 1994 Rwandan Genocide (Bentrovato, 2019).

In 1993, after the country’s first multi-party elections, the first Hutu president was elected only to be assassinated soon after, instigating mass killings of Tutsi in Burundi and the second genocide. To a lesser extent, conflict continued until 2005, a period seeing the Rwandan government launch attacks on Hutu rebel bases internally and in DRC and Tanzania, limited peace talks and the signing of the Arusha Accords in 2000 with a transitional government peace plan in 2001. In 2005, once these accords began to be realised as certain rebel groups joined, President Nkurunziza ascended to presidency, holding power until 2020, causing renewed conflict in 2015 when he decided to stay on for a third term; the unrest instigating a failed coup amplifying the crisis. Burundians once again fled, 400,000 going mostly to Tanzania, with smaller numbers to Rwanda, Uganda, and DRC.

Considered at peace from 2005 to 2015, there was a drive for Burundians to return in the early 2010s. Resulting in the closure of Tanzania’s Mtibila camp in 2012 after an inter-governmental agreement. A camp where many of those now in Dzaleka had been, several choosing continued mobility over the forced repatriation they contend they would have faced, others having left Mtibila some years before finding insecurities had followed them due its proximity to Burundi. Discussing ‘return’ with the few elder Burundians who participated in this study, land repossession and the conflict it would create remains a key obstacle, alongside the discrimination they would face, even amongst their own people, as a result of their label as ‘UN people’, having fled whilst others remained (see Falisse & Niyonkuru, 2015; Purdekova, 2017). Much like young Rwandans involved in the study, those Burundian are mostly the children of parents who had spent many years in displacement; a smaller number arrived alone more recently after hearing from friends or family already in Dzaleka. Like Rwandans who have spent many years in Malawi, Burundians are also found living and working throughout the country.
Conflict in DRC

Whilst few initially, over time, as conflict in Eastern DRC persisted, Congolese have become the largest population in Dzaleka; 500 new arrivals currently arriving each month (Informal conversation, female community leader DRC). Tracing this group’s journey to Malawi, one’s analysis can begin with the presidency of Mobutu and his totalitarian regime that dominated the period following Congo’s independence from Belgium in 1960, to its eventual renaming as the ‘Democratic Republic of the Congo’ in 1997. Throughout the conflicts in Rwanda and Burundi large numbers of Hutu and Tutsi fled into Eastern DRC, destabilising the region as rebel groups formed bases in North and South Kivu from which to launch attacks into Rwanda. President Mobutu failed to suppress these, Rwanda, followed by Uganda and Burundi, invaded in 1996, removing Mobutu and installing President Kabila, an ally to contain Hutu rebels. However, Kabila soon sent away all foreign forces prompting a second conflict involving many of the continent’s countries from 1997 to 2003, eventually resulting in peace accords and a transitional government. Yet, conflict remains in Eastern DRC, mostly in North Kivu province where the government and UN peacekeeping forces continue to clash with various rebel groups. With weak state apparatus, lacking the rule of law to guarantee property rights and the force of law to put down combatants, combined with elite interests that exploit both ethnic cleavages and land disputes, on top of the daily challenges of rural life, many position this conflict as ‘intractable’ (Stearns, 2012); producing the numbers of Congolese people who arrive in Malawi each month.

Although some fled as children with their families many years ago, the majority of the young Congolese who participated in this study left Eastern DRC over the past six years. Most of whom travelling without family and arriving in Dzaleka to be labelled by the RSD as family size one or ‘F1’. What further distinguishes these young people from Rwandans and Burundians – beyond their keen interest in music, fashion, and football over farming – is that in 2019 the government of Malawi adopted *prima facia* determination for Congolese asylum seekers from North and South Kivu and the Katanga Region. Whilst it is unclear if this applies to those who arrived before 2019, unlike many of their Rwandan and Burundian peers, most of the young Congolese involved in the study already had refugee status. A factor greatly impacting their (hoped for) experience of encampment as later chapters reveal. Whilst insecurities back home persist, repatriation is not an option and new arrivals are expected to continue. For many Congolese in Dzaleka, especially those younger, with friends or family already in Canada and the U.S., resettlement is perceived as the only solution to their displacement.
Although these aforementioned populations compose the greater part of Dzaleka’s inhabitants and are therefore the focus of this study, it is important to highlight that people fleeing conflict in the Horn of Africa, from Somalia, Ethiopia, and Sudan, although much fewer in number, have also been in the camp since its early days. At the time of fieldwork, the Somalian community leader said there were 102 Somalians in the camp, a number rising to 114 in 2021. A smaller number of Ethiopians also remain in Dzaleka however, according to the UNHCR are no longer a ‘population of concern’; new arrivals more commonly described as ‘irregular migrants’ heading for South Africa along the ‘Southern Migration Route’ that passes through Malawi (IOM, 2015; 2021).\(^\text{18}\)

![Image of the recently completed tarmac through-road with Dzaleka refugee camp either side](image)

**Figure 12: The recently completed tarmac through-road with Dzaleka refugee camp either side, researcher’s photo**

### Arriving in Dzaleka

The chapter that follows sheds light into young people’s thoughts of Dzaleka on arrival. We see how, although relieved to find an absence of conflict, dominant nonetheless were feelings of “shock” and “surprise” at the living conditions, they found “another side of life”, and their lack of choice due to the constraints they now faced. For many, these thoughts have strengthened throughout their stay. We heard a remark in the previous chapter describing

\(^{18}\) Throughout fieldwork I heard rumours of human trafficking. These are not explored in the thesis as the topic is not considered relevant to the study. Dzaleka’s role is nonetheless one of transit, housing those who travelled from the Horn of Africa while documents are prepared, before onwards movement to South Africa. See: [https://www.unodc.org/unodc/en/human-trafficking/Webstories2021/trafficking-in-refugee-camp-malawi.html](https://www.unodc.org/unodc/en/human-trafficking/Webstories2021/trafficking-in-refugee-camp-malawi.html). An interesting characteristic that speaks, although in a different sense, to young people’s description of Dzaleka as a ‘bridge’.
Dzaleka as a “prison”, albeit an open one; alluding to the flexibility with which restrictions are imposed. Employing similar phases, other young people describe Dzaleka as a “jail”, a place where they are “locked up”. Comments that – although are at times contradicted by young people’s actual lived experiences – speak to Dzaleka’s early foundations as a political prison. Addressing parliament a year after the end of British rule, future, President for Life, Hastings Kamuzu Banda is heard here outlining his plans for those held at Dzaleka Detention Centre:

“I will keep them there and they will rot... I am going to make sure that in addition to the regular prison officers, we have... warders (Youth Leaguers) who will know what to do with these fools… they will knock sense into their heads” (Prime Minister Banda, January 1965).

From its (re)inauguration that year until its closure in 1973, Dzaleka would become the main centre in newly entitled ‘Malawi’ for political prisoners sentenced to ‘preventive detention’, subject to torture and maltreatment (Amnesty International, 1976). What one boy described as a “culture of loss” in Dzaleka is shrouded by such foundations, several mention the voices of these previous inhabitants one can hear on a quiet day. However, the fences once surrounding this place are no longer and the buildings once used by the detention centre’s administration have been converted into housing. In fact, getting down from the minibus on my first day there was little to suggest I had arrived in a refugee camp. Instead, the scene that unfolded resembled another Malawian roadside market town, one straight road splitting it in two, minibuses horning, and people rushing around getting on with their day.

Leaving the bus and grounded in ontological assumptions of camps as places of bureaucratic control (Minca, 2015), I began asking people where I could find the Camp Manager’s office. I thought that her permission, or approval, would be a good place to start, having already been granted official permission by her superior, the Secretary for Homeland Security. However, I soon realised the people I was asking did not know where this was nor even who the camp manager was. As I later discovered, these individuals were more than likely Malawians, in Dzaleka for the camp’s weekly Tuesday market. This market, an assemblage of refugee and Malawian producers, buyers, and sellers, is the largest one for many kilometres. Sprawled out across a stretch of open land to the side of the road were numerous stalls with fruits and vegetables, mats on the ground covered with second-hand clothes and shoes, small grills serving mbuzi (goat), corn or chips, makeshift structures hung with colourful chitenge fabrics and people selling everything in between from cosmetic and hygiene products to brooms, pots, and pans.
Having gathered a general heading for the office I required, I crossed to the other side of the road (see drawing above) and began walking towards a built-up area, leaving the market and its plethora of smells, sights and sounds behind. Crossing a football ground where boys train in the early mornings and evenings – and where the annual, international music festival, Tumaini, is held – I arrived at a fenced compound, the sign ‘Dzaleka Health Clinic’ outside. Serving 70,000 people, 62% from the host community (UNHCR, 2019a), this clinic offers maternity, HIV/AIDS and family planning services and handles minor ailments, with more serious concerns referred to Dowa District Hospital or Lilongwe Central. Young people say this clinic lacks qualified staff and, being open to those in the camp and the local host community, is often very busy; those with the financial resources to do so going illicitly to private Malawian clinics nearby. Moving away from this compound, I began to enter Dzaleka’s myriad of thin and winding alleyways.

Open since 1994, and some having lived there since then, in Dzaleka one finds an urban sprawl of (semi)solid structures that appear to have grown organically, now seemingly interconnected and overlapping. The UNHCR remarks it is partly due to some of these being “illegal” constructions – outside designated plots – encroaching on roads and boreholes, that motivated the recent camp expansion. Such houses differ widely. Whilst some can afford
corrugated roofs to protect from the worst of the elements – strong winds and heavy rains – others make do with more temporary solutions of natural materials replaced annually. Socio-economic differences standing out also in the quality of bricks, some simply sun-dried and likely to collapse in the rainy season, whilst others, costing more, strengthened with fire. Incidentally, whilst girls explain they mostly rely on family and relatives to cope, some cleaning houses or washing clothes, making these bricks, and building houses is said to be a main way that young men make a living in Dzaleka. Enquiring, during our walks, into the few larger compounds with higher walls and big gates, young people explain these belong to Ethiopians, able to afford them on account of the more ‘illicit’ activities they participate in.

Having exited this maze, and after passing numerous churches, small restaurants, bars, and another, but much smaller market that operates daily, I came out at a large open square with a Malawian flag flying in the middle (see young people’s map above). Described by many as the “centre” of Dzaleka, it is here I found the offices of several implementing partners and that of the camp manager, eventually going to join the large mass of people waiting outside the latter. Before entering this office and outlining the institutional layout of Dzaleka, it is important to briefly highlight a key reflection from this first day and importantly, a trend that would later emerge when speaking with young people.
As our walking interview concluded, I asked Burundian and 23-year-old Nestor whether his thoughts of Dzaleka had changed since his arrival seven years ago. He replies, “Now I am used to it, life is normal, I can fight with life here”. Here we hear how, whilst Dzaleka remains a challenge, something that must be fought with to cope, he has become used to it, such a life now becoming ‘normal’. Other young people make similar remarks, suggesting, “all is simple now”, and that they are, “used to this life now”, some living there longer describing Dzaleka as “home”. All comments, amongst others, supporting the idea of young people normalising what policy makers and much literature describe as exceptional or out of the ordinary (Davidson, 2013). We return to this process of ‘normalisation’ young people allude towards later, but it is interesting to note here how such comments draw attention to the camp, not only as a place of restriction and constraint but, as one where ‘normal’ life unfolds (see figures 16 and 17).

This became apparent, not only on that first day, witnessing the Tuesday market, the mixed flows of people moving in and out of this “open” place, the seemingly long-established houses, but also throughout fieldwork, people attending schools, playing or watching football, basketball, and dance, going to church, eating at restaurants, and involved in piecework or household chores. Supporting studies that stress the utility of a logic of ‘normality’ when approaching contexts of displacement (Martin, 2015) and a theme running through the thesis. Yet, whilst this environment is open, void of entrance or boundary, where relationships, livelihoods and routines of everyday life are constantly enacted, at the same time, this is a place where time and space are highly structured by governmental and humanitarian institutions and ensuing policies and interventions, and it is to these we now turn.

Figure 16: A photo exhibition in Lilongwe by young people from Dzaleka
Thus, after a long wait, I spoke with the Camp Manager, outlined the research and asked her approval. The government department managing refugees and asylum seekers in Malawi is the Ministry of Homeland Security (MHS), within which the Department of Refugees coordinates activities, headed by the Commissioner for Refugees. Paid by the UNHCR, the Camp Manager represents the MHS and her office registers new arrivals, distributes plots and provides temporary exit permits. The MHS is also represented by the RSD office that receives new arrivals after registration, beginning the often-lengthy process of interviews to determine refugee status; if rejected, individuals have a month to appeal or must return to their country of origin. The MHS ensures security in Dzaleka through the camp’s police station, however, with limited staff and resources, and a rapidly growing camp population, this is not always achieved. The Ministry of Health is also present through Dzaleka’s health clinic.

Having expressed surprise that an ‘outsider’ had arrived by minibus and not their own car, the Camp Manager suggested it would be necessary, in order to access participants, to collaborate with an NGO. When adopting the policy of encampment, the UNHCR employs a country specific ‘Refugee Coordination Model’ (RCM) that structures its governing principles and institutional setup. Through this model, the UNHCR manages activities, partnering with the aforementioned ministries, several implementing partners and other NGOs. Two implementing partners have their offices in the centre of Dzaleka. The first, Churches Action in Relief and Development (CARD), focuses on livelihood development projects, including livestock and crop production, and business development, whilst the other, Welthungerhilfe (WHH), trains counsellors, provides capacity building and livelihood support to children with disabilities and their parents.

19 Provision of plots no longer in operation at the time of fieldwork due to the lack of space in the camp.
Leaving the centre and walking back towards the main road, next to a basketball ground and a second football pitch is a large compound run by Plan Malawi, the World Food Program’s (WFP) distributing partner in Dzaleka. Meaning ‘receiving’ and thus, highlighting the type of one-way relationship that exists between those living in camps and humanitarian organisations (Carpi, 2019), people must attend Mapokezi monthly to receive food and non-food items, whilst affirming their presence in the camp. One person, amongst other items, receives 1.5kg of pulses, 0.75kg of fortified vegetable oil and 6kg of maize, recently reduced from 13.5kg due to lack of funding. Having stopped during our walking interview to look at the long queues of people waiting there, 25-year-old William from DRC remarked, “Of course receiving is good, but oh my god you have to spend so much time here, sometimes you must return the next day”. Whilst others also speak of the queues, and although many say that what they receive is insufficient, young people do stress the importance of this, “it is everything for us here”, “you will not be safe that month without it”.

Continuing to walk towards the main road and on the other side of this football ground is Plan’s main compound from which they run other projects in areas of child protection, assisting single mothers and sexual and gender-based violence (SGBV). Passing the UNHCR compound adjacent to Plan’s and the RSD next to that, before arriving back at the lines of minibuses, one finds a smaller square where the Jesuit Refugee Service (JRS) is located. This final implementing partner oversees education in Dzaleka, running the camp’s free primary and secondary school, the latter attended also by Malawians, and a number of post-secondary learning opportunities, alongside psychosocial counselling, and ‘WASH’ projects that monitor the various boreholes and public latrines in the camp.

Figure 18: UNHCR’s compound (left), JRS primary school (right), main road (in the distance), researcher’s photo
Whilst these different implementing partners and a number of other NGOs are discussed further by young people in the chapters that follow, it is worth briefly outlining here the post-secondary, higher educational opportunities available in Dzaleka given their considerable importance to many of the young people who participated in the study. It should be noted that numerous young people in Dzaleka do not proceed beyond primary school level, unable to achieve the grades to go further and/or preferring to look for piecework instead. Many, as we will see, due to the lack of work opportunities, see learning as a “a waste of time” for their inability to put any skills they may learn into practice. Nonetheless, for several young people who took part in this study, as Chapter 5 demonstrates, such learning is crucial, young people echoing humanitarian lingo on the importance of education (see Figure 19 below). Some note how, although Dzaleka is in many respects worse than other camps they have been in terms of living conditions and access to work, the opportunities for learning are much better and therefore, explored later as a potential pull-factor to Dzaleka.

Figure 19: JRS’s Naweza (“I can”) project for ‘empowering’ young girls in Dzaleka through education
Thus, whilst JRS offers a number of professional and vocational post-secondary short courses, they collaborate with several other NGOs who also provide learning opportunities, most of which, like many projects implemented in Dzaleka, are open to both those in the camp and the host community. There is Hope (TiH) for example also focuses on professional and vocational skills, offering courses in plumbing, brickwork and carpentry, whilst providing scholarships for post-secondary courses at Malawian institutions. DAFI (Albert Einstein German Academic Refugee Initiative) provides scholarships for undergraduate university positions at Malawian universities, one of the participants being enrolled in this, however, at the end of fieldwork, rumours had spread that DAFI had run out of funding for Malawi and were no longer accepting applications. WUSC, the main aspiration of many young people, provide scholarships for university level education in Canada, followed by eventual Canadian citizenship. Whilst one final NGO, Jesuit Worldwide Learning (JWL) works with JRS to provide online diplomas and degrees in Education, Social Work and Business, in partnership with universities in the U.S. and Canada. All organisations, with the exception of TiH founded by a Burundian from Dzaleka, which operate in camps worldwide.

On the last point, it is worth noting, as can be found in many camps, there are numerous refugee-led CBOs\(^{20}\) in Dzaleka. These aim to help the “whole community”, those in the camp and Malawians nearby, CBO founders suggesting they “fill the gap” left by implementing partners and NGOs. Whilst their goals are broad, their most visible outputs in Dzaleka are in

the plethora of churches and (fee-paid) primary and secondary schools. However, as noted for other camps (Mencutek, 2021), lacking the resources and funding of larger NGOs, their capacities are constrained. Moreover, for many young people spoken with in Dzaleka, such organisations have “limited impact”, operating more as “businesses”, for “person gain”, only “using their volunteers”. 21

21 Two participants volunteer for CBOs and 13 for NGOs, the latter an important source of social and financial capital for a small minority of young people in Dzaleka able to secure these few positions, receiving a monthly stipend or ‘token of appreciation’, and something explored in greater detail in Chapter 3.
Thus, whilst young people’s day-to-day life in Dzaleka appears to be highly structured by government policies and ensuing approach to displaced peoples, and the various projects implemented by the aforementioned humanitarian organisations, it is important to conclude this chapter by mentioning how young people’s future lives are also heavily influenced by this institutional environment.\textsuperscript{22} Young people’s thoughts for the future are examined in the following chapter, and although we see there how their aspirations are shaped by different histories and present lived experiences, ‘official’ futures for those living in Dzaleka and any camp coordinated by the UNHCR for that matter, are channelled towards three main avenues, defined by the UNHCR as ‘durable solutions’.

Entering UNHCR’s office in Dzaleka one finds several leaflets printed in Swahili, French and English.\textsuperscript{23} One of these contains information on resettlement. It explains, third-country resettlement to live permanently and obtain citizenship, “is neither a guarantee nor a right”. Highlighting that less than 1% of the world’s refugees can be resettled annually, “resettlement is the rare exception, not the norm”. It states how decisions are up to receiving countries, the UNHCR only profiling and identifying those meeting these countries’ requirements, known as submissions for resettlement. Despite this guidance, for many spoken with, young and old, resettlement or \textit{Bulia} (“going to where the white man lives”) is the preferred durable solution; a trend highlighted in a recent JAM report for Malawi (UNHCR et al., 2014). The absence of leaflets regarding other durable solutions emblematic of this and differentiating this context from others (see Jansen, 2011) where local integration is more sought after by those in camps; perhaps due to Malawi’s broader context of socio-economic and environmental insecurities.

Globally, there is a considerable gap between those with resettlement needs and those being submitted for resettlement by the UNHCR. In 2018, 1.2 million people were “in need of resettlement”, 81,337 were submitted for resettlement and not all of these were accepted for departure (UNHCR, 2019b). The UNHCR projected for 2020 there would be global resettlement needs of more than 1.44 million refugees worldwide, alongside a reduction in the number of resettlement places (UNHCR, 2019b, p.10). Whilst data on Rwandan and Burundian resettlement submission figures are lacking in the UNHCR’s resettlement

\textsuperscript{22} This is not to say these young people lack agentic capacities, for, as the thesis demonstrates, such structures are both constraining and enabling.

\textsuperscript{23} In Dzaleka, English is the main language used by the UNHCR, government officials and NGO employees – Chichewa also playing a role amongst Malawian staff – whilst projects and important information is translated into local languages. Swahili is spoken in public spaces by the majority, except those from the Horn of Africa who generally speak good English and Amharic or Somali. At JRS’s Primary and Secondary school, subjects are taught in English, Chichewa taught as a compulsory language at primary. French is also common in Dzaleka but more so amongst Congolese and older Burundians and Rwandans who grew up back home with the legacy of Belgian colonial rule. However, it is considered less valuable than English which is prized for its ability to communicate with NGOs and outsiders visiting Dzaleka. Although some ‘educated’ elder people speak English, most know only Swahili, French or their local languages, numerous for Congolese, Kinyarwanda for Rwandans, and Kirundi for Burundians.
database, mirroring Dzaleka’s growing Congolese population, Figure 23 sheds light on Congolese submissions in the camp since 2003. Although it is unclear how many people from DRC had resettlement needs during this period, it is evident that those submitted are a small minority. Figure 24 provides specific data on 2018 projected resettlement needs for all those in Dzaleka and the intended submissions the following year; figures aligning with global trends.

![Graph showing UNHCR Congolese resettlement submissions for Dzaleka from 2005-2021](image)

**Figure 23**: UNHCR Congolese resettlement submissions for Dzaleka from 2005-2021. Source: UNHCR’s ‘Resettlement Data Finder’ database

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Country of Asylum</th>
<th>Country of Origin</th>
<th>Total projected resettlement needs (including multi-year planning)</th>
<th>UNHCR submissions planned for 2019 (target)</th>
<th>UNHCR core staff capacity in 2019</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Cases</td>
<td>Persons</td>
<td>Cases</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Malawi</td>
<td>Burundi</td>
<td>430</td>
<td>1,650</td>
<td>55</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>DRC</td>
<td>1,475</td>
<td>5,310</td>
<td>180</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Rwanda</td>
<td>250</td>
<td>500</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Various</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>90</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Figure 24**: UNHCR resettlement submissions for Dzaleka 2019. Source: UNHCR, 2018

On a separate note, it is interesting to see in Figure 24 that the UNHCR attempts to submit equally around 15% of those with resettlement needs from each country. It is not clear whether this is the case every year and data on whether these projections matched outcomes could not be found at the time of writing, but if accurate, would contradict rumours in the camp that people from DRC are preferred for resettlement.
Opportunities for voluntary repatriation were touched on earlier, where it was revealed how those in Dzaleka, much like those in numerous settings of displacement, for various reasons are unable or unwilling to return, despite growing momentum for Rwandans and Burundians to do so. Likewise, the third durable solution, local integration, faces considerable obstacles in Malawi. On one hand, as noted, this is due to the restrictions; despite numerous Rwandans and Burundians having done so somewhat illicitly, still needing to return to the camp monthly to feign their presence at Mapokezi. Yet, for many young people, settling outside Dzaleka is not seen as something that would necessarily improve their situation. This is partly on account of the growing hostility towards foreigners in the country (UNHCR, WFP, & Malawi, 2012; 2014), and Malawi’s context as a country of multifaceted insecurities. Yet linked to this – and without overlooking the considerable challenges these young people face in Dzaleka daily – is the greater access to opportunities they have there, as later chapters explore.

Concluding remarks

The aim of this chapter was to provide updated knowledge on an under-researched setting of encampment and in doing so, ground the chapters that follow and young people’s stories within. We saw how Dzaleka, much like many camps, although shrouded by its supposed temporality, is a permanent feature of Malawi’s socio-economic and geographical landscape. Re-opened in 1994 to those fleeing conflict in the Great Lakes and the Horn of Africa, Dzaleka has long been home to people of various nationalities in ever-protracting situations of displacement. Now resembling more a town than a refugee camp, it lacks the infrastructural markers that would otherwise position it so. This blurred divide between the camp and its surroundings is heightened by those who have long since left Dzaleka to live, work and learn in Malawian towns, but also by the numerous Malawians from surrounding villages who come to Dzaleka each day to do the same.

Living not in a border area but a relatively short 45km from the country’s capital, it is interesting to note that numerous families in Dzaleka are in double exile, having chosen onwards mobility after facing growing insecurities or cessation clauses in previous countries of exile. Thus, despite not the first choice for many, it appears that Malawi’s peaceful nature, its distance from existing “troubles”, and its relatively permissive refugee framework have been and are pull factors to the country. However, in the chapters that follow we see how other features such as

\[24\] It is still unclear how the government’s recent signing of the New York Declaration may impact this.
\[25\] During fieldwork, the 2019 election results were being contested at the country’s highest court. This period saw a number of demonstrations taking place, many of which turned violent, and a reported number of ‘foreigner’ businesses broken into and looted, notably Burundian and Rwandan stores in the business district of Lilongwe and other large cities. At one point a video was passing around in the camp of what was said to be a Burundian man’s house looted and set on fire, increasing people’s concern in the camp that anti-foreigner and especially anti-refugee sentiment was growing in the country.
the opportunity for resettlement and various pathways of formal learning also play key roles in drawing young people to Dzaleka.

Whilst young people's contributions have guided much of this chapter, and although these have introduced us to several of the themes and trends we see develop in the thesis, it is clear that what has unfolded is a more adult-centric and top-down approach to understanding Dzaleka. As Turner (2001, p.64) notes, this is just one of the numerous 'contexts' that can be gathered from such a setting, but is useful nevertheless for grounding the ensuing chapters and young people's narratives there. Guiding us to the quotidian 'normal' life that continues to take place in Dzaleka, the context that emerged is arguably one where past, present, and future lives are intimately structured by government restrictions, policies of encampment and humanitarian interventions. However, what is crucial, and the goal of what follows, is to reveal further ways of giving meaning to this environment as shared by the young people living there.

Figure 25: Clothes on a washing line in Dzaleka. Researcher's photo.
Chapter 2: “Camp life”

“I know my future can start now, but I don’t have the opportunity to make that future be true”

Josef, DRC, 24 years old

In this first analytical chapter, we explore a narrative of constraint employed by all the young people who participated in this study. Whilst the introductory chapter shed light on how these individuals give meaning to their generational stage of ‘youth’, how it should be experienced – as a temporary stage of becoming – what unfolds in this chapter is its actual manifestation in the camp. Dzaleka as a place of constraint is, perhaps unsurprisingly, a dominant way, not only young people, but many across generations portray this environment and a narrative aligning with dominant existing depictions of camps (Jefferson et al., 2019). The restrictions, challenges, and ensuing lack of opportunities having serious impact on people’s daily lives and thoughts for the future. However, responding to the lacuna of youth perspectives of encampment, here we see how the impact of such constraints is differentiated for young people who are unable to develop markers of social adulthood and move forwards with their lives. Moreover, whilst the ‘waithood’ we see conveyed by young people in this chapter may resonate with many of their peers worldwide, including many young Malawians who perhaps find themselves facing even worse insecurities, we find that a context of encampment differs, not only through the highly structured and uncertain nature of waiting there, but importantly, through the means (or hope) it nurtures for circumnavigating this entrenched stuckness.

This chapter begins by revealing the discourse of “three lives” young people employ in their stories, a tool that structures the discussions that follow. The first of which explains how a narrative of constraint emerges through young people’s comparison of Dzaleka with their past lives, finding “another side of life” in the camp. The second section shifts to young people’s current thoughts of Dzaleka as a place of “nothing to do” and “no choice”, before a third explores their thoughts for the future, young people now “going forward blindly” as a result of the limitations they face. Each section fleshing out the particular consequences such challenges have for individuals in this generation stage. A final discussion then reflects upon the waithood emerging in this chapter and draws attention to a tension visible in young people’s stories that, although Dzaleka is heavily portrayed as a place of constraint, at the

26 Due to the dominance of this narrative in all the young people’s stories, expressed from the outset, and as it speaks to more ‘traditional’ camp studies literature, I explore this portrayal of Dzaleka first, revealing what it means for those in the generational stage of youth. Doing so now enables Chapter 3 to then demonstrate how young people are nonetheless not passive to such an overwhelming context of constraint, and it provides the foundations for Chapter 4, where we hear from one group of young people that take this narrative further, applying it to their thoughts and experiences of waiting in the camp and thus, concluding that the only way for them to move forwards with their lives is by leaving Dzaleka.
same time, it is also seen as one of opportunity, a temporary “bridge” that can enable them to escape this waithood.

**Past, Present and Future (hoped for) lives**

Exploring perceptions of the present, it is clear one’s past experiences have a considerable impact on how current meanings of self, relationships, place and belonging, amongst others, are constructed and these cannot be separated but are intimately connected to one’s thoughts for the future (Bailey, 2009; Grayson, 2017; Hanson, 2017).

> “Undoubtedly, in order to understand young people’s lives and actions in the present we need to consider the impact of imaginings of the future. It is also vital, I would argue, that attention is paid to the ways that the past informs the lives of the young, both in terms of their present and with regard to their imaginings of and aspirations for the future” (Hart, 2014, p.222).

Grounded in his research with young, displaced people, Hart (2014) critiques the more dichotomic approaches often found in Childhood and Youth studies, suggesting these individuals should not only be seen as ‘beings’ or ‘becomings’, but also as ‘beens’. In young people’s stories, this stands out in the way they speak of their “past” lives before Dzaleka, their “present” lives in the camp, and the “future”, “good” lives they will have when they leave.27 Something reduced to two for those only knowing “camp life”. Some portraying the movement between these as beginning life again. For example, 22-year-old Thalia from Rwanda explains, on arrival, “I didn’t know how life would be. It was like being born again but I was old already”, whilst 25-year-old Augustin from DRC shares, “When someone leaves, it is like they re-new their life again, they can re-start”, 20-year-old Arthur from Rwanda adding, “Resettlement gives a fresh start, you can be whoever you want, an opportunity to start over”.

People dividing their lives in displacement into these phases is highlighted by Hieronymi (2009) who discusses life before becoming a refugee, being a refugee and life after when one is no longer a refugee. Moreover, with an adult-focus, Den Boer (2015) reveals how Congolese asylum seekers in Kampala do not wish to return to their old lives, but, leaving these in another time and space and wanting to move forwards, dream of resettlement, meaning the possibility of building a new home and starting a new life. Yet, as the thesis will show, waiting for a better life has particular meanings for and impacts on young people, for whom, Hieronymi (2009) suggests, this second life is felt considerably longer than those older who became refugees at a later age; alluding to the “triple pressure” (Jeffrey, 2008) of waiting young people face.

27 A discursive tool drawing attention to young people’s underlying experience of displacement as waiting, Dzaleka a temporary ‘bridge’, as the chapter will later reveal.

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Whilst this seemingly neat division of their lives into distinct parts may imply a more fixed and linear understanding of how these interact – young people want to move forwards through them – engaging with these in this chapter we find how the linkages between each are more fluid and dynamic in practice. Paraphrasing Hansen (2017, p.282), in order to make sense of ‘youth’ we need to understand this complexity, considering, “Not only their past, present, and future but also the mutable relations and shifting sequences between these temporal orders”.

Guided by this, here we explore young people’s portrayal of their “camp life” as a time and place of constraint. We find, as Hart notes, that their thoughts of the past and future have much influence on how this is constructed. Yet, interestingly, we also see, alluding to the malleability of memory, that the past (and future) is also shaped and re-interpreted in light of young people’s present experiences.28 Hearing this, we must recall that a narrative of challenge and restriction, whilst a way of making sense of a more complex reality – finding trends in a broader set of experiences – also serves to get a point across to the listener, myself. As such, young people’s portrayal of their present lives as “another side of life” and their past ones as generally “better” should be considered with this in mind. That said, this should not overshadow the plethora of challenges these young people face in Dzaleka.

“Another side of life”

To begin this first section, it is useful to briefly hear 23-year-old Laura’s story of the camp since her arrival three years ago with her three younger sisters. Laura and I first met outside the camp’s bank where she works – a unique job in Dzaleka29 – whilst another young person, with whom I was walking, asked her about his account. She soon expressed interest in the study and agreed to participate. Sharing only that they fled DRC in 2016 and came straight to Malawi through Burundi and Tanzania, as we sat down next to the camp’s makeshift tennis court, a quieter part of the camp, Laura began telling me her thoughts of living in Dzaleka these years:

“Being a refugee is difficult, being a young person here is difficult. You feel limited. Back home I dreamed… of finishing university, searching for a job, getting married, having children and because I will be educated, I can educate them. But I came here, found another reality. I have never lived in this kind of house, it’s like we are dreaming. Imagine you are dreaming, and you go somewhere like a camp, but then you don’t wake up and realise you’re not dreaming. It’s like that, you can’t believe you are really here. When you think of it all, you are scared for the future. It makes me stressed”

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28 It is interesting to note that in these re-inventions of the past, the fighting and conflict they fled, for the greater part, is largely omitted. Young people preferring instead to focus on what they miss from their past lives.

29 ‘MyBucks’ was opened in 2018 with the goal of stimulating and assisting microbusinesses in the camp: https://www.unhcr.org/afr/news/stories/2018/5/5af45b034/refugee-camp-in-malawi-gets-banking-services.html
As our interview unfolded, Laura went on to speak of the learning opportunities she participated in. Whilst waiting for a chance to finish the university degree she was forced to stop when fleeing, she mentions passing through English courses with JRS and a number of coding classes with Teknolab and Appfactory, eventually becoming a teacher for the latter. Several young people involved in the study mention their participation in these opportunities for learning coding, Francis for example explains how it now allows him to earn a living from the camp and navigate the mobility restrictions placed on those in Dzaleka. Whilst Henry draws attention to the way that coding has enabled him to learn “another language” that he can use to communicate with people around the world. Laura remarks that it has been important for her to become a “role model” for other young girls in the camp as “there are not many women in technology”, she adds that the applications she is currently working on with her students have the capacity to help people in Dzaleka; Henry explaining his idea for a health application that would assist people to better understand some main health issues and how to prevent or deal with them.

Wanting to be a “big woman”, whilst at the same time needing to provide for her sisters, Laura explains how she later found the job at the bank and although she is not using the skills she learnt, she is still gaining by “being busy”. We return to parts of Laura’s story as the chapter develops and later in the thesis; the notion of “keeping busy” and an emphasis on formal learning alluding to different narratives young people also employ. However, for now, we build the current one by expanding upon Laura’s initial thoughts of Dzaleka.

Laura begins by mentioning the dreams she had in DRC. Whilst the third section of this chapter explores young people’s thoughts for the future, and the impact that living in Dzaleka has on these, it is interesting to note here how Laura remarks that, arriving with these thoughts in mind she found, “another reality”. Alluding to the living conditions, she goes on to state, “I have never lived in this kind of house, it is like we are dreaming”. Whilst not all young people could respond, many having lived their whole lives in Dzaleka, others too young to remember how they felt on arrival, examining the responses from those who could we find similar sentiments. Several keen to stress this other “reality”. Also drawing attention to housing, 27-year-old Christine who arrived five years ago from DRC, explains, “I was surprised… about the sleeping and living situation, the way you go to Mapokezi, the houses were different. I was in a new world, different to before”. Marc, Burundian and 22 years old, arriving eight years ago, echoes Christine’s remarks, sharing, “I was surprised, it was a new world, it was a different life, the way people lived was different”, his close friend Nestor, also Burundian and arriving seven

30 The prior a CBO run by a Burundian living in Dzaleka and the latter, part of ‘Microsoft’s 4Afrika’ initiative, see: https://times.mw/nurturing-software-developers-for-refugees.
years ago, now aged 23, also stresses the, “different life here, the way people are living”, and 24 year old Andrew who arrived just under three years ago simply explains how he found “another side of life”. The uncertainty and shock underlying such comments can be grasped through 24-year-old Josef’s thoughts on how long he thought he would remain when he arrived from DRC three years ago:

“I didn’t know. I arrived at midnight, the car dropped us and left, we slept outside. I didn’t know anything about being a refugee. I had a quiet life before, doing my studies, no problem. I didn’t know what happened here”

For some, the situation they found in Dzaleka was so bad they would rather return home. Arriving two years ago after fleeing DRC and with no knowledge of resettlement in his first weeks, 25-year-old Hermand initially thought, “how can I get back to my home country and learn”, a plan also expressed by fellow Congolese, 23-year-old Fabien:

“I thought I had lost everything, I didn’t think I could live here, I thought if I could get transport I would return, I thought it would be better to live in insecurity. Being here alone was not easy”

Fabien was not alone but arrived with a cousin with whom he then lived. Yet, unlike girls in his position who are perhaps less able to do so, he explains, being made to do numerous chores, he soon left and found a room of his own to rent. In this passage, Fabien draws attention to another social factor that in many ways differentiates young people’s experiences of Dzaleka. Arriving without family and now living alone is a significant factor, increasing the challenges faced by many young people and a point to which we return shortly. Moreover, hearing this reference to the “insecurity” back home we are reminded of an earlier conversation where we learnt that whilst a few had little knowledge of Malawi and others just followed those heading there, for many, a key pull factor was its peaceful past and present. As such, despite the shock and disappointment many are keen to stress, it is important to remember that compared to where they had come from, they did find an absence of conflict on arrival.

A year after arriving, Fabien enrolled in JRS’s tailoring course. Completing this and assisted by JRS, he and his friends started their own CBO, renting a small building near the Camp Manager’s office. Three years on, Fabien is well known in Dzaleka for the quality of his clothes, he makes many of the outfits that performers wear in the camp’s annual music festival. I was introduced to Fabien by another participant who suggested he could make a shirt for a wedding I had been invited to. As we became acquainted, I would often spend time in Fabien’s shop speaking with him and his friends. One day as I waited for Fabien to finish and go for lunch, he made an interesting remark. He explained how he often heard fellow Congolese
young people in particular saying to one another they have never lived in a “place like this”, and suggested it was so their friends would not think they came from “difficult situations”.

Whilst it is difficult to know the accuracy of this comment, hearing it I am reminded of a similar conversation had some months later with David, also Congolese. Discussing a recent finding, I asked David whether originating from a town or village may impact one’s experience of Dzaleka. Although insufficient first-hand data was gathered regarding young people’s own origins, in what would become a dominant response, or stereotype perhaps, he explained that those from villages, mostly Rwandans and to a lesser extent Burundians, were used to “the struggle”, finding the living conditions “normal”. However, for those from towns, mainly Congolese, he supports Fabien, suggesting, “they don’t want others to think they were living like that before”. Whether a coping mechanism to deal with past experiences of trauma or a way of being brave in the face of adversity, it is clear, as Chapter 4 reveals, that peers play an important role for many young people in Dzaleka and as such, acting in ways to manage how others perceive oneself is clearly as important for young people in the camp as it perhaps is for many worldwide (Rohrbeck & Garvin, 2014). Before examining the present challenges young people confront in Dzaleka it is interesting to briefly build this discussion of the past through a lens of food. Whilst, as later sections reveal, topics of education and employment clearly hold more weight, such a lens is nonetheless interesting to explore for its mention by a wide range of young people.

I first met Thalia as she was heading home after working on her online diploma in JWL’s computer room. Arriving five years ago with her mother and two older brothers, Thalia explains she had been “scared” arriving in this “complicated” environment, “it was like being born again but I was old already”. Having completed her remaining year at secondary school, Thalia enrolled in several short courses with JRS, including Case Management, Early Childhood Development and Computer Literacy. Now 22, she is studying for a diploma in Social Work, with a view to applying for the degree. She mentions that equipped with the earlier courses, she secured a role as a Community Social worker with Naweza, a CBO working on projects to support young girls in Dzaleka, however, towards the end of fieldwork and needing time to complete her studies, had resigned this position. Thalia’s insightful comments are returned to later, but here it is interesting to hear her thoughts of the food in her past and present lives. Born in Rwanda but having lived or travelled through many countries before arriving in Dzaleka, I asked Thalia to compare these countries to Malawi, she replies:

“Just like so many cows. First, we moved from Congo, but I was young, to Burundi, then left again to Rwanda, then through Tanzania, to here. In Burundi and Congo we were surrounded by so many cows. I grew up drinking milk, I love milk, I can do that
and not have any food. But I lost everything, I can’t see those cows. Food was easy to get and nice compared to Malawian food… it is not just the fact I live in camp, even those who are not refugees, it is just maize all the time, I’m not used to that, we never ate maize before, we made Nsima of cassava. This maize I was just like, I still don’t like it. We used to eat green bananas, eat potatoes, mixing with vegetables. So, with this, the food and all, I am like, oh my God I’m dying. Everything is just complicated”

There are several points to be gathered from this, although first, as seen through her focus on the type of foods not its lack thereof, it is important to understand that Thalia is perhaps in a relatively better off position in Dzaleka, having volunteered, and therefore receiving the monthly stipend, whilst having a brother who lives and works in Lilongwe, sending money to support the family; something practiced by Burundians and Rwandans (see Msowoya, 2019). Constructing her comparison through a lens of food, Thalia mentions growing up surrounded by cows, drinking milk, and eating a variety of foods. However, living in Malawi, and not just due to being in Dzaleka, she explains that now they must eat only maize. She remarks, “I lost everything”, all is “complicated”. Although being invited to lunch and finding a pot displaying what she described as “mixing”, it appears that through food Thalia portrays a more symbolic loss, the loss of an old life she remembers with fondness or perhaps one whose meaning has augmented in light of her new environment.

Whilst partially symbolic, Thalia does note that before, “food was easy to get”. A remark that speaks to the shortage of food in Dzaleka, a condition shared by many Malawians who although may have greater access to farmland, do not benefit from Mapokezi. Yet, in 2018, the UNHCR and its implementing partners reduced the monthly food allocation per person from, amongst other items, 12kg of maize to 6kg; one woman outside Mapokezi one day shouting to me, “they are trying to kill us”. This 6kg soon reduces as people are forced to sell some to pay for other basic items and reduced again if one is forced to sell some to pay for mills to crush the corn into powder for Nsima. Clearly, as noted, the restrictions on those in Dzaleka are more fluid in practice, some renting farmland nearby from Malawians, nonetheless, facing limitations on becoming economically and food secure, many are forced to depend on these diminishing handouts. Yet, as we will see, in general young people place greater emphasis on other challenges they face, issues of food instead found to be of much importance for children in camps (Atkinson, 2007) and for elder people, who raise this topic more often in terms of being unable to feed their families.

Nevertheless, it is interesting to see that for young people arriving from other camps, when

31 Incidentally the product of a colonial project, with the British importing maize from South America to be grown throughout Malawi at the expense of more local staples such as sorghum, millet, and yams, leading to food insecurity and nutritional deficiencies in many parts of the country.
comparing Dzaleka with those, the topic of food also arose portraying Dzaleka as a place of constraint. Of the 40 young people, eleven had been in other camps. Four Rwandan, of whom, three lived in Tanzania before Mtubila camp closed and one in Malawi’s other camp, Luwani, before that closed. Five Burundian, two of these also lived in Luwani, one in Kenya in Kakuma and the other two in Tanzania. Augustin from DRC lived in Mehaba in Zambia before going to Malawi and Abshir, the only Somalian who participated, passed through Dadaab in Kenya. Perhaps the first point to make is that for these individuals, arriving in Dzaleka their first thoughts differed from those coming straight from their own countries. For example, Benoit, Burundian but born in Mtubila, explains he had not been safe there due to his Tutsi ethnicity and eventually arrived in Dzaleka four years ago but, “(I) was not too shocked because I had lived in a camp before, it is all similar, nothing is easy, I was ready for good and bad”. Whilst Didi shares that she was happy to leave her previous camp in Tanzania where she had grown up because she knew that her father was in Dzaleka waiting for her. Despite now used to encampment, exploring how these young people situate Dzaleka in their stories of previous camps a complex picture emerges, one that again is partly grounded in food. Olivier, now 28, fled Burundi in his penultimate year of secondary school going to Kakuma camp in Kenya. Living there for two years and finding life “bad”, he returned home, completing his education and just finishing his second year at university when he was forced to flee again, arriving in Dzaleka three years ago, now married with a child. Asking Olivier to compare his experiences of Kakuma with Dzaleka he explains:

“Kakuma is very hot, you are not allowed to leave, not even a mile outside. But they managed to take care of refugees in terms of food, if you eat carefully it could last a month. Here in Malawi, when you arrive they don’t support you with pots or household materials, the food is not enough for two weeks. Life here is too tough. But here at least if you have something to do you can do it and also you can leave the camp. Also in Kenya, when you leave the transit they give you temporary shelter, but here after they register you they leave you”

Alluding to the leniency, until recently, with which official restrictions are imposed in Malawi, Olivier highlights the ease of movement in and out of Dzaleka. Yet, with regards to the support one is provided on arrival and during their time there, we hear how the situation in Kakuma was better. Moreover, something central here and clear for others with experiences in different camps is the food situation in Dzaleka; Mapokezi not lasting the month. We see this in Augustin’s comparison of Dzaleka with Meheba, he suggests, “How you survive is different. In Meheba you can survive good, in Dzaleka people suffer, they lack food, they can sleep with hunger”. Something also seen in Abshir’s comparison of Dzaleka with Dadaab:
“Malawi is shit, this is worse. In Dadaab there is enough food, you are given vegetables, staples, you are even given cash handouts, it is more alive there. I have heard people coming here and saying they have lost weight, because the food is not what they used to have”

However, as can be seen from Olivier’s comparison, there are certain aspects of Dzaleka that are an improvement on other camps. Olivier does say that compared to Kakuma, “if you have something to do you can do it”. Although it is not clear what he is referring to, this could be in reference to the more relaxed restrictions on mobility imposed in Dzaleka. One day I accompanied Olivier on a thirty-minute cycle south of the camp to a small piece of land he rented (illegally) from a Malawian. As we arrived on his bike, he explained how he had been renting it for two years and tried to come a few days of the week to produce items to sell on his table in the camp’s daily market. A practice shared by many people living in the camp, including for example, Henry’s family, Henry saying how he also tries to go a few days of the week to help his father with some of the more ‘difficult farming jobs’. Beyond this openness of the camp, Augustin goes on to explain, “Malawi is better though, Dzaleka is good for schooling, in Meheba there are no opportunities for education”. Yet, we are reminded by Benoit’s comments that for some there is little difference between camps and when asked to compare Dzaleka with Mtabila, he simply replies, “The camp is the camp, there is no difference”.

Thus, looking to their past lives, most young people are keen to stress that arriving in Dzaleka they found another reality, another side of life they had not expected, and perhaps not encountered before. Whilst, as later chapters show, this life may now be “normal”, young people getting on with their lives, it remains that when situating their present lives in stories of those before, although a somewhat complex and ambiguous picture emerges, a narrative of Dzaleka as a place of constraint is visible; something made so through a lens of food. However, much of what has been discussed here is neither specific to young people in the camp nor to people living in Dzaleka, such findings shared by elder people there and young Malawians. Yet, as the following sections reveal, it is the impact of such constraints on those in this generational stage, the consequences they have for these individuals, and the opportunities for escaping such challenges that the camp provides, which differentiates this for young people in Dzaleka. Before exploring such ideas, it is important to briefly highlight one final point with regards to these stories of the past and that is, although they may tell of an (imagined) better past, this is not always equated with a desire to return.

Whilst a few mention more long-term goals of returning to help “rebuild” their countries, on the whole, most young people imply that “going back” is not an option. Josef notes, “I don’t think to go back, I am good here. I miss my family, I can go back, but they are displaced, so I don’t
know where they are, I can go back, but better to stay here”. Olivier explains, “I have never thought of going back, the people and relatives that I had are lost”. Nestor simply remarks, “I have no thoughts of going home” and Christine states she is, “waiting for resettlement, I can’t go back, nowhere to go, I have no house, no work”. In the third section we explore why young people are perhaps no longer looking to go “back” but, grounded in their generational stage of youth, are instead looking to move forwards with their lives and as Christine’s comment suggests, the camp provides specific pathways for doing so.

“Nothing to do” and “No choice”

That young people perceive their present lives in Dzaleka as constrained is clear not only by looking back but also through frequent descriptions of the camp now as a “prison”, a “trap”, a “hopeless” place, where they are not “provided” for and as Laura noted, “like a dream, but you don’t wake up”. Yet, encapsulating these comments, two phrases repeated by many are that in Dzaleka there is “nothing to do” and that living there, one has “no choice”; both interconnected, the latter implying although they are not necessarily doing “nothing”, what they are doing is not what they want. In this second section, exploring young people’s experiences of Dzaleka through these remarks we find that themes of education and employment are crucial and facing challenges in terms of these, as the final section reveals, has a great impact on how these young people see their futures in the camp.

“There is a problem of schools, having 40,000 people with one primary and secondary school, you go look and find there is no space, so you end up staying in camp, uneducated, don’t know what the future will look like, doing nothing, it can make you go crazy, it’s difficult. Even if you study there is nothing, you must finish the diploma, but after finishing you can’t do anything, you just stay in the camp, you can’t improve your life” (Thalia, Rwandan, 22 years old).

As we heard earlier and alluding to a further narrative some young people are employing, moving forwards with her education is clearly important for Thalia, even giving up a volunteering position and ceasing to participate with a dance group to concentrate on her studies. Although Thalia, unlike many in Dzaleka, has been able to progress with her education, there are perhaps two points to gather from this passage, the latter more relevant to Thalia’s own situation in Dzaleka. The first refers to the camp’s overpopulation and its impact on education, many young people left with nothing to do as a result.

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32 A point important to draw attention to, that, whilst staying in the camp is preferred, ‘return’ is nonetheless often possible for displaced peoples.
Despite recent efforts to expand the camp, Dzaleka’s ever-growing population is the cause of numerous issues. Whilst touching on several areas of camp life, noticeably health and sanitation, for young people, one significant impact is on their learning. Thalia suggests this is evident at school, the two JRS facilities originally meant to cater for a camp population of 10,000 people.\footnote{Whilst there are numerous CBO-run schools, these are fee-paying unlike the JRS schools and these are also overcrowded, lacking teaching materials, many families unable to afford the fees combined with the costs of uniforms and school equipment.} Coming to the end of one walking interview, Josef, having already discussed the impact of new arrivals on waiting times at the boreholes and Mapokezi, remarked how more people are arriving but the classrooms and number of teachers remain the same. Samantha, a 17-year-old Rwandan, one of only two participants still attending secondary school, explains:

“At school, there are many students to one teacher. I used to go to private school but then my parents could not pay anymore so now I go to JRS secondary school. Students get nothing, the teacher can’t teach and there is overcrowding”

Moreover, this is also an issue to which others allude in terms of post-secondary higher education in the camp. In the first phase of fieldwork, a Malawian NGO employee who helps coordinate JRS’s numerous short courses shared:

“[…] the overpopulation issue, if there are more opportunities it can help young people, because the competition is high when it comes to learning opportunities, I witnessed myself how many apply, 100 for only 20 or 30 places”

A point echoed by several young people. Hermand for example, 25 years old, from DRC, and arriving two years ago, in response to being asked whether there were opportunities in the camp to help young people, replies, “They aren’t common. There is higher learning, but the places are limited, 20 places but 200 apply, what are the other 180 doing? I have applied for the diploma since I arrived”. It should again briefly be highlighted that restrictions on leaving Dzaleka are more fluid in reality and some young people do pursue education outside the camp. Whilst limited data was gathered regarding this, during my time in Dzaleka I was able to speak to a few young people who do so. One participant for example invited me to visit his temporary accommodation in the next town along from the camp where he sometimes stays after attending the Malawian secondary school located there, later accompanying him on the half an hour walk to the school where he has convinced his classmates he comes from a small village in the north of Malawi. Moreover, I once met a girl on the bus leaving Dzaleka who explained she had simply been signing on at the monthly Mapokezi for her family who now lived in Zomba where she was studying at the university there. In both cases such individuals
having grown up in Malawi and able to convince others they are Malawian. Yet, accessing these external opportunities requires social and economic capital many do not possess. Forced to remain in Dzaleka, they must face great competition in securing one of the few spaces on courses in the camp.

In terms of participating in higher education in Dzaleka, 23 young people mentioned completing JRS short courses, ranging from English as a Foreign Language (EFL) to tailoring and Youth Sports Leaders. Moreover, 13 were or had been enrolled in JWL’s diploma, a number having completed this and now doing their degree. One Burundian boy secured a place at a Malawian university through the DAFI sponsored scheme, and several others had sent off applications for WUSC. We explore these ‘formal’ learning activities in the ultimate analytical chapter, seeing how some young people are looking to use this pathway as a way to move forwards with their lives in the camp. However, as the chapter prior to that reveals, it remains that although these opportunities are in many ways the only option for young people in Dzaleka, many do not place much importance on these, seeing they are unable to use the skills they may acquire and preferring to wait until they are resettled to continue with their learning.

The second point Thalia makes alludes to this, referring to the situation when and if someone completes secondary school, or higher education – something many are unable to do – but lacking the opportunity to put the skills they have learnt into practice through work, they still find themselves with nothing to do. It should be noted that several young people are involved in piecework and such activities, helping them to cope, are explored in the following chapter, moreover, a small minority, as Thalia used to, volunteer for NGOs, receiving monthly token of appreciations. However, in terms of following one’s aspirations, examined in the final section of this chapter, and using the knowledge one has acquired, opportunities are limited.

As noted in the previous chapter, when ratifying the 1951 Convention, the government made several reservations, including ones on the rights of refugees to move freely around Malawi and to be employed. Unable to ‘officially’ leave the camp nor be legally employed is seen by many as a serious impediment to developing a livelihood in Malawi and has been highlighted for various settings of encampment (Horst, 2006). Loic, 25 years old and from DRC, although he holds a volunteer role as a security guard at an NGO compound, explains these restrictions are the main thing making young people’s lives difficult in Dzaleka, remarking, “In the camp there is no job, it is about the law, refugees can’t work in Malawi. He has no access, he is under the law of Malawi”. Moreover, David, also holding a volunteer role, but with JWL, coordinating higher education opportunities, states:
“The challenge is not being free to move, not to have the right to work. When you have skills, they have trained you, you think you can work and get good money, so you can also change, because you shouldn’t remain the same person, but as we are so restricted it is a challenge”

Clearly these restrictions impact all those in Dzaleka. Arriving six years ago and with seven children in Dzaleka, 63-year-old Mike from DRC suggests, “Being a refugee is not easy, you leave your country to a new place where you can’t work, you don’t know when you will leave”, going on to say, in this situation, one is left with “nothing to do”. Nonetheless, in her study of young Syrians in a border town in the North of Jordan, Wagner (2017) draws similar findings. She talks of young people who enrol in the plethora of courses offered by humanitarian organisations but are unable to put these skills into practice through dignified employment. She contends, NGOs have the goal of producing a neoliberal model of refugee entrepreneurs and ‘citizen refugees’, but ignore the restrictions young people face when attempting to move into the Jordanian labour market. Despite the aforementioned fluidity with which these restrictions, perhaps until recently, are enforced, it remains that the constraints imposed in terms of finding work outside the camp, combined with the challenges they face in making an income within Dzaleka, means many young people say they have nothing to do. As Hermand concludes, “There is no work, there are no activities, so the camp is boring, maybe two in every 12 are working, so what are those 10 doing Josh? There is nothing to do”.

“In five years, I do not know where I will be, but I want my life to change. Back in Burundi my dream was to be a doctor but here there is no choice, I can’t follow what I want because the way life is here. I want to work but I don’t know what, you can’t choose, anything comes. You can say you want to be a doctor, but you don’t have a choice” (Marie, Burundian, 18 years old)

Whilst the following chapters demonstrate that young people in Dzaleka are not doing “nothing”, but expressing their agency in a number of ways, the point such individuals aim to make through this phrase is clear. Moreover, combining this with another frequent comment, that they have “no choice” in Dzaleka, we develop a fuller picture of the camp as a place of constraint. As the excerpt above shows, such a sentiment speaks to the lack of work opportunities in Dzaleka, Marie just coming to the end of secondary school and hoping to start working. Unsurprisingly, this is intimately connected to the challenges young people face in terms of education, 28-year-old Francine explaining, “There are no opportunities for furthering your dreams. In Form 4 I wanted to study nursing, but there are no opportunities for that here, which is somehow frustrating”. 

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Thus, many begin work they do not want to do; Augustin discusses his volunteer role as a gardener for an NGO, “I am a refugee, I don’t have means, any way to support my life, that’s why I do that job”. Several young people, and in doing so bringing some specificity for a context of encampment, suggest that after school, volunteering is the only choice. Something highlighted in a recent WUSC report conducted by young people from the camp, Malawi and Canada, it states many have this goal after school, which although seems positive, “is the only option no matter how qualified one is” (WUSC, 2019, p.43). David mentions the “token of appreciation” and its vast difference to the stipend received by his Malawian colleagues, but concludes, “we have no choice”. His friend adds how other young people laugh at volunteers, “when they see a successful person with qualifications, they think you should be doing a real job”. Volunteering is explored in a later chapter, however it should be noted that those who do so, mostly young people, are a small minority, the spaces few, and as such, although negative comments are made, the multifaceted utility of this opportunity should not be understated.

A plethora of factors impact young people’s experience of Dzaleka, notably, gender, one’s capacity to speak English, the lingua franca of the camp, ethnicity, Rwandan and Burundian Tutsis a minority, refugee status, the first step towards resettlement and nationality, Congolese people rumoured to most likely to receive this status. Whilst all merit exploration and are returned to throughout the thesis, due to limitations of space, and in an attempt to shed light on whom or for which young people notions of “nothing to do” and significantly, “no choice” hold most weight, we now examine one key factor, those arriving and living alone in Dzaleka.

Halfway through an undergraduate degree in marketing, Loic fled DRC four years ago for Zambia where he thought he would stay until it was safe to return to his mother and younger siblings. Told by someone there that “Malawi is poor, but they help refugees”, he says, “I had no choice”. Arriving in Dzaleka three and a half years ago, he met a man he knew from home who offered him a place to stay and with whom he still lives. I got to know Loic during the first phase of fieldwork, spending time at an NGO compound where he volunteers as a guard. Always smiling, Loic was keen to talk to practice his English he had been studying for many months with JRS, explaining, “it is impossible to be someone without English”, alluding not only to his perception of self that forms the basis for discussions in later chapters, but also to accessing various opportunities in Dzaleka.

During our interviews, Loic, wanting to speak English and therefore without an interpreter, shared his experiences of Dzaleka. He explains he was initially “disturbed” as it was the first camp he had been in, not wanting to be there for long as “life was not good”. Whilst Loic places great emphasis on the importance of studying – education a “door” – understanding that resettlement is only a small chance, he remarks how receiving refugee status after a year was
crucial as it gave him some sense of “ID”, whilst enabling him to be chosen for resettlement; no longer having immediate goals of returning home, “Malawi is in Africa so it is like living in DRC”. As I got to know Loic, it became clear that being alone in Dzaleka without relatives has had and continues to have a great impact on him. In our first interview, discussing the main challenges faced by young people, Loic was keen to highlight this:

“Some are studying, others are not, they are focussed on food. The issue is, if you are alone here, like I am, then you have to focus on finding food and money for food, but also following education. If you have family, they will help with food, while you can have more time for studying and going to school. Life as F1 is very difficult... If you have biological family then you could be at school, but if not, there is no one to help you, you must do it all, first thing you must do is look for money, everything else is second”

As our discussion unfolded, I asked him whether there were opportunities for young people to progress with their education, and in his reply, he sheds further light on the topic of family. He states:

“Yes, but if you are alone it is tough, I have to work hard, I don’t like to waste time, not even two minutes. But the issue is that school and work can come into conflict, there is not enough time to do both. There are free schools, but youth are lazy, they don’t like work, life is difficult in the camp, you have to chase work”

Why are they lazy?

“Because of the situation at home, parents give them all they need, for example money, phones, they become lazy, boys and girls”

Here we learn about Loic's situation of living alone and his perception of those with families. With no one to help him, he “must do it all”, find food, find the money for this, and follow his education. This results in a situation where he has no or very little choice, his work and education often coming into conflict. He compares his own predicament to those with families who Loic portrays as individuals who although may be “lazy”, have greater choice, incidentally able to choose not to work. Such comments are echoed by other young people without family in Dzaleka. Augustin for example remarks, “If you are alone in the camp you suffer. If no family, you are responsible for yourself”. Like Loic, speaking with Augustin, one can see the

34 'Family size 1', up to 'F beacoup', is a category given by the Camp Manager’s office on arrival depending on how many people there are in one’s ‘case’ and thus being considered for UNHCR’s durable solutions. 15 young people are ‘F1’, but such a term is misleading for it does not consider relatives who are already in the camp and thus, one should not assume all are in the same position in terms of access to familiar networks of support.
importance he places on work when he explains how he recently stopped morning boxing practice because he was finding himself too tired at work.

Yet, whilst Loic and other young people living alone in Dzaleka may see themselves as disadvantaged compared to those able to rely on family support, it should be noted that the value of this rapport, particularly between parent and child, should perhaps not be overstressed. Alluding to issues young people worldwide might describe, those with families in Dzaleka highlight the lack of advice or guidance the latter receives from the prior based on parents’ overly “dictatorial” approach to communication. As we walked around the camp, Prince shared a revealing account of this:

“We should be counselled now and again. For example, a girl having a boy issue, the parent doesn’t respond well. If we are friends, I come to them, tell them I like a boy and then they can say, ‘that’s alright’. Instead, they shout, ‘if I see that boy, I will kill him’. This can result in early pregnancy, HIV, all because parents push us away. Parents so strict. My father would say, ‘with my age and your age, we talk about girls? Get lost’.

Here Prince speaks to the gendered aspect of this relationship, he highlights how young girls may face greater issues and is a point made clearer by Thalia in the following excerpt:

“Parents… I never sat down with mum for her to explain how things work, not even menstruation, I was at school, saw blood coming, didn’t know what was happening. They don’t talk to us, tell us how our bodies change. There is a lack of information, your body is pushing you to do something else, may end up risking your life, go there have boyfriend, not bad, but if you don’t know anything, something can happen. Can have sex, get pregnant, get sick… your mother or father cannot always be on your back, but they should at least talk with you, tell you if you do this, protect yourself. But they don’t do that our parents. You find many girls getting pregnancies, especially primary and secondary school. If get pregnancy or sick, you are in trouble, you will be beaten, they will treat you like crazy, girls end up hating their family”

Here, Thalia provides a poignant and revealing view of this parent-daughter relationship, one that is lacking, concluding, as Prince remarked in a prior interview, “Adults think they are everything, they think we can’t do anything. If parents were friends not dictators, then the situation could be improved”. However, speaking with these ‘adults’, perhaps due to their relatively shorter time in encampment, it appears that any disruption in the relations between themselves and their children is a result of living in Dzaleka and the challenges they face there in terms of being able to provide for their families. Speaking with Mike, in Dzaleka with his wife and seven of his children, he explains this breakdown:
“There is no respect. Adults can't provide for youth, so young people don’t consider or think of adults. The parent knows they cannot provide for them, so how can they order or advise them? So, they just tolerate one another because of the life conditions”

Agreeing, whilst building the earlier discussion of young people with nothing to do, 57-year-old Mama Lydia, who, previously in Luwani, has lived in Dzaleka with her family for 13 years, shares:

“Young people have no time to be with elder people. There is nothing for them to do, so lots of time they are with their peers, when they are with their peers there is no time to be with their parents. Because there is nothing to do, if they stay at home, they see it is boring, so they roam around, so parents have no chance of seeing their children”

Whilst her husband, 64-year-old Celestin, echoing Mike’s comment, suggests:

“Here in the camp the relationship is not there. Elder people are afraid of approaching young people because for them it is hard to support young people. If you want to direct them, elder people can’t give advice. Young people feel abandoned and confused, so they end up being taken by peer pressure doing unhelpful things”

This perceived disruption of parent/child rapport aligns with several other studies conducted in contexts of encampment (see Auerbach, 2010; Hampshire et al., 2008; Tefferi, 2007; Turner, 1999, 2006), a number of these suggest, and a point with much traction in Dzaleka, that the UNHCR has taken over this parental (and husband) role. As such, whilst it is clear those without family see themselves as disadvantaged, it is important that such relations are put in context in a setting that in many ways hinders individuals from performing familiar roles.

“You shouldn’t remain the same person”

Frequenting a small restaurant in the camp each day, I was able to meet young people who I had not encountered previously. One such individual was Abshir, a 29-year-old Somalian who arrived in Dzaleka two years prior. By the end of fieldwork, we had become well acquainted and would often eat together. He would tell me how he was planning to leave Malawi if he did not get refugee status soon and go to South Africa where he could find work, perhaps at a filling station. Excerpts from our discussions are used throughout these chapters, but one particular conversation is worth highlighting here to demonstrate the impact that having “nothing to do” and “no choice” have on Abshir in his generational stage of youth:

What does ‘youth’ mean to you?
“Beginning life, no longer with your mother, you must find your place in the world, but also you are lost, especially if you are a refugee and you don’t know where to go, you have no plan”

Do you consider yourself a youth?

“Yes, but I am about to pass it because I am 29”

What happens when you pass it?

“You are more settled. You have something you will do the rest of your life. You have found your place in the world”

What would you prefer, remaining in youth or being more settled?

“Being more settled, because right now I am trying to find my place”

What are you doing now to become more settled?

“Trying to improve my life, trying to reach the stage of settled earlier, aiming to get money and a wife”

Does the camp impact your efforts to achieve this?

“It prevents it, there is no work, and you cannot learn skills, I am just doing small jobs, trading, selling something to someone. But it doesn’t go far”

What else are you doing during the day?

“Trying to find money, offering help to people, selling things. But I would say these are not productive things, because there is nothing to do when you are locked up”

Here we are reminded of the introductory chapter where we heard how young people in the camp believe their life stage should be experienced. Abshir describes ‘youth’ as those who are lost, unsettled and must be searching for their place in the world. This aligns with those previous comments, youth portrayed as a temporary stage of preparing for one’s future life, taking steps towards many goals, looking to take on new roles and responsibilities and transition into social adulthood. For Abshir, becoming settled and therefore, making this transition, entails finding money, a wife and as he would later share, starting a family and becoming “F20”. However, he explains that the camp prevents him from achieving these and he cannot become settled. Grounding his view that there is nothing to do in Dzaleka, he states “there is no work”, “you can’t learn skills” and although he is doing some activities, “these are not productive things, because there is nothing to do when you are locked up”. Such
comments echo those we have already heard so far in this chapter, young people describe themselves as individuals lacking opportunities for education and employment. Not long after our final interview Abshir decided to leave the camp, and we return to his story in due course.

“**You go blindly, not knowing where you go**”

“In other words, the reality of the camp is lived in the present, a present that is structured by the past and that influences the envisioned future by affecting perspectives and ambitions” (Grayson, 2017, p.180).

Shifting the temporal frame to young people’s thoughts for the future, something of great importance for those in this generational stage, in this third section, the argument is made that not only does looking back develop this narrative of constraint, but for many, looking forward strengthens such a view. Building on Abshir’s brief excerpt, here we begin to see how the impacts of such challenges and restrictions differ for young people, as their efforts at moving forwards with their lives are impeded and they find themselves unable to transition into social adulthood.

“**Everyone makes goals, in my life I want to be someone, but in Dzaleka you can’t do what you plan**” (Prince, DRC, 22 years old).

A recurring and central theme in conversations with young people was the need to become “someone”. This was alluded to earlier by David who spoke of the need to “change”, “you shouldn’t remain the same person”, and perhaps also by Abshir through his mention of needing to find his place in the world. But a point made more overtly by others including 20-year-old Fabrice from DRC for example who remarks, “I want to be called somebody else, today I am Fabrice, maybe in the future I will be Director Fabrice, Professor Fabrice” or by 23-year-old Didi from Rwanda who states, “I dream to be somebody else in the future, I shouldn’t stay in same position, I need to move forward”.

This complex and multifaceted goal is explored in greater detail in the penultimate two analytical chapters, but it is clear that such a goal, so aligned with a need to move forwards with one’s life, is intimately connected to young people’s thoughts for transitioning into social adulthood. As Fabrice’s comment suggests, pathways to transitioning are potentially found in progressing with one’s education or by having long-term employment, yet, we have already seen the challenges young people in Dzaleka face with regards to these. It is interesting to briefly explore another aspiration and a more ‘traditional’ pathway into adulthood, that of marriage, and how young people give meaning to this as a result of being in the camp.
“At least you don’t want to have that feeling to be like my parents, I don’t want to be one day in a place like this with my children, I wouldn’t want that” (Marie, Burundian, 18 years old).

Many young people in Dzaleka, as for numerous contexts, express the desire to marry and start their own family. Such a goal, likely part of becoming ‘someone’, is clearly tied to entering adulthood. The introductory chapter highlighted how these individuals employ marriage as an important marker of this next generational stage. However, whilst a key goal, especially for those who came to Dzaleka alone, one can see that several young people are reluctant or unable to take this step whilst they remain in the camp and as a result, do not see themselves as capable of making this transition. Such individuals, as we heard elder people mention, discuss the obstacles they would face in being able to support this family. A view shared by 21-year-old Lucy from Congo, who, having lived in Dzaleka for three years with her parents and eight siblings, explains:

“I see other people getting married and having children, they are having a tough life, their children’s needs are not met, this is what I fear happening, not being able to care for my own children”

Whilst 23-year-old Didi from Rwanda who lives with her parents and much younger siblings, whom she cares for, states:

“I see mothers and fathers struggling to feed their children, now for me it is too early to have a family because I do not feel I will be able to look after them. I will marry when I can help feed my family”

Discussing the importance of refugee status, a topic discussed shortly, Elizabeth, a 19-year-old Burundian, suggests that if she gets this there would a chance for “being helped”. Asked what this means, she says, “Being resettled, getting out of Malawi, so I can be in a situation to have children”. Young men convey similar ideas. For Celestin, Burundian and 29 years old, whilst not reluctant to marry as Lucy, Didi and Elizabeth are, for him, economic challenges and ethnic differences inhibit his attempts. In large part, and much like Sommers (2011) found for young men in Rwanda and Burundi, this is because he can not afford to buy a plot and build a house, his monthly token of appreciation from a CBO school insufficient. Moreover, this situation was worsened as his girlfriend is Congolese and Hutu, whilst he is half Tutsi, half Hutu, her brother not permitting such a marriage. Yet, Celestin – again alluding to a choice girls perhaps are unable to take so easily – eventually moved (illegally) to live outside the camp, opening a small shop and some months after fieldwork telling me that he and his girlfriend were now married, soon to have their first child.
However, whilst it is clear that living in Dzaleka impacts young people’s thoughts of marriage and for young men at least, their capacity to do so – aligning with numerous contexts worldwide where young people are unable to attain this important marker of adulthood (Grabska, 2020; Grayson, 2017) – the relationship between starting a family and shifting out of the life stage of youth is not so straightforward. Speaking with young people who did have children and were or had been married, even then, when asked, they still considered themselves youth. Eight of the young participants had children, of these, three are young men still with their spouses, the rest single mothers. What is revealing is how these young people position themselves in relation to their definitions of adulthood. Durham (2004) notes that not only is ‘youth’ a socially and culturally constructed concept, but it is relational. Its meaning is constantly (re)formed in relation to other generational categories.

Ada, 26 years old, from Burundi and living in Dzaleka for 17 years with her son and sister, explains that although she had a child, because she never married – the father left for South Africa – “I remain a youth”. Whilst, Benoit and Olivier, taking a chronological approach, suggest as they had not reached the age of 35 and 30 respectively, were not yet adults. However, perhaps drawing a line most clearly between the constraints of the camp and her thoughts of being a youth, 23-year-old Cathy from DRC, who lives alone with two children, having defined adulthood, suggested, “The life conditions in the camp mean that I cannot be like that, I will remain a young person because life complicates age”. Thus, for some, the idea of marriage and having children indicates taking on new roles and responsibilities and transitioning into social adulthood. Young people who suggest this contend that being in Dzaleka they are unable to take this step. Moreover, as we have seen here, even for those who are married or have children, it appears that such a step is insufficient, as they face considerable challenges developing other characteristics of the latter stage and thus, the stage of youth is prolonged.

Faced with this context – portrayed in a later chapter as one of “stuckness” – unable to move closer towards one’s aspirations, unable not only to start a family but lacking opportunities to progress with education and/or find stable employment, several young people imply that living in Dzaleka they go forward “blindly”. We expand upon this in Chapter 4 where it is shown how many young people believe others are in control of their futures in Dzaleka, but is a point alluded to throughout this chapter, supporting studies that stress the ‘uncertainty’ of displacement (Horst & Grabska, 2015). We heard Laura remark, “When you think of it all, you are scared for the future”, stating elsewhere, “I am doing all this while waiting for a future I don’t know”, and Thalia shared how facing constraints with access to education in Dzaleka,
“You don’t know what the future will look like”. Yet, this is a point articulately made by 24-year-old Benoit from Burundi who arrived in Dzaleka four years ago.

Born in Tanzania in Mtabila, Benoit tells how following the murder of his mother as a result of her ethnicity, his father sent him to live with a friend to avoid the violence of the camp. Wanting to learn more about his country, aged 16 he returned to Burundi but was not accepted having lived in Tanzania all his life. An experience many returnees find on arrival and in some ways agrees with Hammond’s (2014, p.506) view that understanding return as a return to a prior way of life, is both unrealistic and impractical. Treated as a foreigner and facing ethnic discrimination he fled to Malawi, arriving alone in Dzaleka aged of 20. He now lives with his wife and child, making money by occasionally cutting hair in his friend’s salon, where we first met. That the camp is a constraint for Benoit is clear throughout our interview. For example, asking him his daily routine he replies, “When you are not working, it is like living in a jail. If you find piecework like building or whatever, then you do that, but it is not fixed”.

As our conversation progressed Benoit revealed more about how he sees his future while living in Dzaleka. We heard him remark earlier, “the camp is the camp”, when discussing the differences between the camps he has been in, but wanting to probe further into how he perceived “the camp”, I asked him to describe this, he explains:

“It is where someone is kept without freedom of movement, you are not able to look to the future. You go blindly, not knowing where you go, without freedom of expression, no one likes being in camp, if they could choose, they would leave. As a father with a family I see life here has no future, how will I support them, pay the school fees”

Whilst confirming the fears of the girls we just heard from regarding providing for a family in Dzaleka, this excerpt tell us much about Benoit’s broader experience of encampment and how this has impacted his thoughts for the future. The constraints he is facing there are blurring his vision of the future, he goes “blindly”, not knowing where he is going, this leaves “no future” for him and his family. Comments mirrored by other young people. Thalia builds upon her earlier remark and points towards this when talking about the difference between her life in the camp and the one she will have when she is resettled:

“It is different. This one is more stressful, that one will be nervous of all, but here ahh shit, it is real, a real stress, not a simple one, you have no access to opportunities,

35 In her study of asylum detention in the UK, Turnbull (2015, p.67) also contends that the lived experience of ‘passing time’ there is essentially about “waiting in conditions of profound uncertainty and unpredictability”, her informants suggesting that it is through such uncertainty and resulting ignorance that the state governs these centres, enabling them to deport people. A point perhaps interesting to explore in terms of those managing camps.
apart from education if you want to study, health is worse, the living condition is worse and again you are just here, you don’t know where you will be tomorrow, it is stressful"

The uncertainty of young people’s futures in this context was corroborated by elder people. For example, Mama Lydia, having given birth to eight children in Luwani and Dzaleka, explains, “Young people grow up in the camp not knowing where to go, they still live with their parents, there is no way they can work on their own”. Whilst Grace, mother of seven, having arrived from Rwanda twelve years ago, provides a more critical perspective, she affirms:

“They are not thinking of their futures. They are doing things that make them look good, but they have no plan. They need counselling and advice, but the way young people are, they won't work with them. It is a generation getting lost”

The Somalian Community Leader suggests young people turn to alcohol as a result, “Even those who go to school, they are not seeing future”. While the female community leader for DRC states:

“Young people have no plans. But they can’t plan because they are limited here. If there were more chances to go to school they could plan. Many young people in the camp get diplomas, but even when finished they can’t work, this all means they are unable to have visions. They just say, ‘we want resettlement’”

These comments align with those seen so far, young people described as “not knowing where to go”, a “lost generation”, “unable to have visions”; it reminds us of Abshir’s view of young people as “lost” and Benoit’s idea that he and his peers go blindly in the camp. Before concluding the chapter with a reflection on the ‘waithood’ that has emerged in these discussions, it is useful to briefly expand upon this notion of going blindly and shed light on for which young people this is particularly poignant.

As greater numbers of asylum seekers started arriving in Malawi in the 2000s, determining eligibility for refugee status became an ever-increasing issue. To confront this, under the guidance of the UNHCR, and shifting from the prima facie approach, the government established the RSD unit in 2006 (UNHCR, 2010). Since its creation, the UNHCR has worked to strengthen the capacity of this unit, however, serious backlogs have emerged and the performance of this unit criticised, having granted no statuses from 2011 to 2014 (UNHCR, 2014). Literature has explored the issues involved with labelling displaced persons. Zetter (1991, p.44) describes non-participatory labelling as, ‘a process of stereotyping which involves disaggregation, standardization, and the formulation of clear cut categories’. He states that in effect, labelling replaces individual identities with stereotyped ones prescribing the assumed needs of a group. He goes on to explain that in our contemporary world of globalisation, forced
displacement and migration, states instrumentalise such labels to manage flows of people; with the result that the refugee label has become politicised and, “the protective label ‘refugee’ is no longer a basic Convention right, but a highly privileged prize” (Zetter, 2007, p.184). Expanding this, Kneebone (2010, p.10) suggests states focus on “status” in order to establish who is afforded rights, meaning “status regimes” have emerged, largely led by “political rationales rather than individual needs”.

Whether this is the case here would require further research into the mechanisms involved in this process in Malawi, however, it is clear from the graphs presented in the previous chapter that many people in Dzaleka, although recognised by the UNHCR, are still in the long process of obtaining refugee status; including 12 of the young people participating in the study, two Congolese, one Somalian, six Burundians and three Rwandan, one having status but recently losing it as her family was told to return to Rwanda. Whilst many in Dzaleka are without status, looking through the conversations had with these young people it is clear that lacking this important identifier has particular implications for them in their generational stage of youth.

Born in Mogadishu in 1990, Abshir is one of the eldest young people in the study and one of the only approximately 100 Somalians in Dzaleka. His mother was killed when he was two and he left Somalia aged 14 for South Africa. He lived there for 10 years, experiencing growing xenophobia, until 2015 when he returned home to look after his aging father suffering with dementia. In 2016, after his father’s death and seeing there were no opportunities in Somalia, he left, travelling through Kenya and Tanzania, before arriving in Malawi in 2017. He lived in Lilongwe for some time with friends and then, for reasons not stated, came to the camp in early 2018. Like many others, Abshir sees Malawi as a place of safety, “You can be yourself, you don’t have to watch your back all the time”, in reference to the Kenyan camps he passed through where Al-Shabaab is present and Kenyan ‘Anti-Terrorism’ police indiscriminate.

Thus, Abshir had been in Dzaleka for a year and a half, classified as F1 and living with other young Somalians, when in our first interview he told me about the largest challenge he faces in Dzaleka, his lack of refugee status. For Abshir, this lack of status is closely connected to views Benoit shared with us about going blindly in the camp. He explains:

“The camp is a trap, especially for youth. The refugee process in Malawi doesn’t work, to know if you have it, it takes five years, so it takes years to know your future. Here you cannot work so the only opportunity is to study, but the opportunities to study are not providing actual skills that can be used to get a job”

For Abshir, knowing your future goes hand in hand with having refugee status, a process that in Dzaleka he says, takes considerable time. He goes on to compare this with the process in South Africa where, “on arrival, you have the interview, then you are either rejected or given
asylum”; presumably implying a shorter process. In our second interview, I asked Abshir about the impact of lacking status:

“Status equals freedom, the goal here is to become a refugee, if you don’t have that, you can’t get a travel document. If you have a relative in another country, you can’t start reunification without status. It stops people from moving forward”

Move forward with?

“Our lives. If you don’t have status then you are disappointed with life, you have seen friends moving on, maybe with resettlement”

Here we learn of Abshir’s aspirations of becoming a refugee so that he can get a travel document. As he told me elsewhere, on arrival in Dzaleka he did not know about “these status issues”, arriving in the camp he thought he would receive this, apply for reunification and move to live with his brother in the US. Asking him what his thoughts of the camp were now, he says:

“I think I will leave soon for another country, get status there. Status is freedom”

Why is this so important?

“To move on with life you need freedom, now you can’t get what you want, you feel like you are in an open prison. It is open but it is still a prison, you have seen me each day, just here or there”

We learn here how lacking status impacts his thoughts of the future, of achieving his aspirations and his ability to move forward with his life. Consequently, he explains he has no option but to leave Dzaleka, a place he describes as a ‘trap’, an ‘open prison’ and instead go somewhere he can receive status and thus, the freedom to move on with his life. In his analysis of the ‘Governance of the refugee problem in Africa’, Fontaine (2006), the former director of the Office of the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) in DRC, talks about large backlogs that develop in RSD units and how many people end up waiting long periods in limbo. He suggests this could be a driver for secondary movements towards Southern Africa and here we can see that Abshir’s story supports such a view. As our final interview came to a close, I asked Abshir where he sees himself in five years’ time, he remarks:

“It is bleak, you need resources to get opportunities, but you don’t have resources here, so it is very hard to know where you will end up, there are no opportunities. In the camp you are just waiting for something to happen, but you don’t know what it is. Next year I will try to go to Mozambique and work, maybe in a gas station”

Much like the comments made by other young people, we are guided towards an uncertain
view of the future. He explains, due to certain challenges and in particular, lack of status, the future is “hard to know” and one is left in a state of “waiting”, a key theme of this study. We see how the camp impacts Abshir’s views of the future, but through these passages we are also invited to draw a connection between his views of Dzaleka and his remarks regarding the meaning of youth. He described youth as those who must find their place in the world and settle. Such remarks align closely with what he says here about the need for moving forwards. Yet, as he said before, “You are lost, especially if you are a refugee and you don’t know where to go, you don’t have a plan”, in the camp he cannot become settled or start a family and here he is echoing these thoughts with comments of not knowing one’s future, accounting them to his lack of refugee status. Thus, it is clear that Abshir’s aspirations are intertwined with his generational stage and the result of being in Dzaleka — of being in Dzaleka without refugee status — is that he cannot see a future there where these aspirations are achieved.

Three months after fieldwork I received a Whatsapp message from Abshir saying he had moved to Mozambique to stay with friends. Four months later he told me he was in South Africa, explaining that in Mozambique there were no opportunities, but in South Africa, although it was dangerous, there are many opportunities for work. He said that the following month he would have his RSD meeting and that, unlike in Dzaleka, he would receive the result that day, adding how it is easy for Somalians to get status in South Africa. Abshir’s story reveals one way that young people, mostly male and F1, are able to navigate the “open prison” of Dzaleka through onwards mobility. However, this is not chosen nor even possible for all and what remains to be seen in later chapters is how those who remain in Dzaleka make sense and respond to the challenges and tensions structuring their lives there.

Waithood in Dzaleka

Thus, what this chapter has revealed is a narrative of constraint shrouding young people’s early thoughts on arrival and reinforced when looking to their past lives before the camp. The latter somewhat surprising given the violence and insecurities from which they had fled, but perhaps the result of needing to get a point across to the listener, and to oneself, wanting to reimagine the past given one’s present circumstances. Whilst the challenges mentioned are felt across generations, as has been gradually demonstrated, their consequences are potentially experienced differently by young people. Individuals who perceive themselves with nothing to do in Dzaleka and no choice, and consequently unable to move forwards with their lives and make the inter-generational transition into social adulthood. Looking to the future, such a narrative pervades their stories as young people see themselves as not in control of their lives, going forward blindly, and unable to achieve their aspirations.
In this respect, hearing this portrayal of Dzaleka, one can see such findings align with much of the literature on youth in displacement and refugee camps, studies depicting young people as individuals who are ‘stuck’ in liminal spaces. Moreover, what has emerged is another setting of young people in waithood, “Forced to live in a liminal, neither-here-nor-there state; they are no longer children who require care, yet they are not yet considered [by themselves] mature social adults” (Honwana, 2012, p.3). The challenges young people describe here are shared by numerous young people worldwide who are facing ‘social death’ (Vigh, 2006), ‘stuck’ in ‘permanent ambiguity’ (Sommers, 2012) or ‘protracted liminality’ (Thieme, 2018). However, what we have also seen is that the waithood enacted in Dzaleka, and no doubt in numerous contexts of encampment, is perhaps nuanced, its ‘liminality’ heightened, by certain structural constraints; governmental restrictions on the right to movement and employment, the issues associated with refugee status and the ensuing uncertainty these both induce for the future.

Hearing these discussions, one is drawn to what was described in the introductory chapter as a more ‘deficient’ or ‘crisis’ approach to waithood, “a period of stagnation characterized by helplessness, dependency and boredom” (Masquelier, 2013, p.475). Something standing out when listening to elder people’s perceptions of young people in Dzaleka, described as “sacrificed”, “needing help”, “getting lost” and, in a comment structuring the penultimate analytical chapters, “not living where they are”. Thoughts echoed at an institutional level, the UNHCR reports, “youth are wasting their lives” (Evans et al., 2013), different NGOs in the camp aim to address the “problematic stage of youth” (Interview with CARD). Before shifting to another narrative employed by young people, one of learning, and thus, one that demonstrates they are not simply passive to the aforementioned challenges – building a more ‘productive’ enactment of waithood – it is important to introduce a tension fleshed out in later chapters. Contributing to existing third way studies that speak of camps as places of contradictions, whilst these young people are keen to portray Dzaleka as a place of restriction and limitation, at the same time, further adding to differentiate this context from other settings of waithood, they also portray the camp as a place that will one day enable them to reach their hoped for, future “good” life.

Dzaleka “a bridge”

Speaking with 25-year-old William from DRC one day about the different lives young people allude towards in their stories and asking him why he and others do this, he explains:

“This is like, should I call it a bridge, once you get here it is not the final destination. First you must do RSD to be recognised as a refugee and be eligible for opportunities like resettlement. People, I should include myself, we prefer resettlement because yeh, we believe life is better outside, so yeh, we consider this as a bridge to somewhere”
In this emic notion of a “bridge” we find a similar waiting invoked as implied through young people’s discourse of “three lives”. Camps often positioned as such (Agier, 2002; Bissell, 2007; Conlon, 2011), and as this and the preceding chapter revealed, one sees various experiences of waiting in Dzaleka. In the queues outside Mapokezi and various governmental or NGO offices, waiting to be seen and at a less visible but ubiquitous, ‘bureaucratic’ level, people waiting on arrival to be registered and provided with a plot, then over one’s time in Dzaleka, waiting first for refugee status and then the “final decision of the camp”. All steps, bar the first that are neither given nor straightforward, some still waiting for status after more than ten years. Yet, despite its multifaceted nature in settings of encampment, speaking with young people in Dzaleka we see how their waiting is very much orientated towards the ultimate step of leaving Dzaleka, regardless of how they express their ‘agency in waiting’ (Brun, 2015).

This is apparent from William’s description of Dzaleka as a “bridge” and other young people’s portrayal of the camp as a “temporary” place, not the “final destination”, but a stepping point where one must complete several tasks before crossing over to a better life. It is interesting to note how such a notion speaks to Malawi’s, and Dzaleka’s, aforementioned role in Southern Africa as a place of transit for flows of people moving south. Moreover, whilst aligning with elder people’s thoughts of Dzaleka, it is clear this notion of a bridge could apply to numerous settings of mobility. However, as we have seen and will see, it is the highly structured and uncertain nature of waiting in the camp – “a bridge to somewhere” – as well as the conceptual and lived similarities between the ‘camp’ and ‘youth’, both perhaps temporary ‘bridges’, that demonstrate the significance of such a notion to this setting and for these individuals.

Lastly, zooming out and locating this temporary bridge and what it means for young people (as the thesis reveals) in broader trajectories and flows of people, we find it lends support to studies that advocate for the opening up of mobilities as an alternative solution to forced displacement (Long, 2014). Monsutti (2007, 2008) argues that solutions are not only found when movements stop, ‘back and forth’ journeys and continued mobility enables displaced people to build their own transformative solutions (Long, 2014). People move for reasons beyond conflict alone (Bakewell, 2000; Bakewell & Bonfiglio, 2013) as later chapters show.

Thus, we begin to see a further picture of Dzaleka, not only as one of constraint and limitation, but as one of opportunity, and in the chapters that follow we explore this apparent tension, shedding light into the specific pathways young people suggest this ‘bridge’ provides, enabling them to navigate waithood and move forwards with their lives.

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36 It is interesting to highlight the experiential overlap in waiting’s modalities for refugee camps and asylum centres in the global north, Rotter (2016) for example discussing the latter and distinguishing between the main focus of long-term waiting for refugee status or a change in government policy and then more short-term waiting for ‘immediate objects’ such as letters confirming appeal hearings or decisions and meetings with solicitors.
Chapter 3: “Dzaleka is a school, a teacher”

The chapter prior to this shed light on a dominant way all young people who participated in the study give meaning to their lived environment in Dzaleka. Despite the prominence of this perspective in their stories, over the course of fieldwork it became apparent that these same young people, to varying degrees, also employ another and for some, a potentially more meaningful view of the camp. Further responding to the lacuna of youth perspectives of encampment, in this chapter, I reveal how Dzaleka is also perceived as a “school” or a “teacher”; a narrative of learning consistent and coexisting with the one prior, in many ways emerging in direct response to the constraints young people are facing. As such, I argue, although their narrative of constraint may imply a more ‘deficient’ enactment of waithood, these young people are not passive to such challenges, but are navigating them and actively learning to “struggle”, “survive”, “cope” and “deal” with this environment.

After briefly elaborating upon the chapter’s approach to ‘agency’ and ‘learning’, – the latter understood in a broader sense of the term, beyond the classroom – the ensuing section grounds the discussions that follow by introducing the reader to one young person’s experiences of Dzaleka since his arrival there many years ago. Three main sources of learning, emerging from this story, are then explored – examining the role of NGOs operating in the camp, and young people’s multifaceted relationships with people and place – before the final section examines some ways young people have learnt to cope in the camp, concluding with the praxis of “keeping busy”; a useful emic term to understand not only how young people are coping but also how they are enacting their waithood in this context.

Conceptualising Agency

With the narrative of constraint in mind it is important to first assess young people’s capacity to “make a difference” (Giddens, 1984, p.14) in such a context, responding to Giddens’s (1984, p.15) enquiry of, “What can count as an action when power is confined by structure?”. In doing so, it is interesting to initially, briefly look at how two young people understand their and others’ capacity to act in Dzaleka. For 24-year-old Benoit from Burundi, an overwhelming context of constraint is emphasised:

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37 As such, it makes sense to explore this narrative now before moving on to the lens of waiting. Moreover, this chapter is usefully positioned because fleshing out how young people are coping, through the umbrella term of ‘keeping busy’, it introduces young people’s enactment of waithood in Dzaleka. The final two analytical chapters, whose guiding theme is waiting, are then able to pick apart this emic praxis and flesh out how and why different young people ‘keep busy’ and thus, experience waithood in differing ways and in doing so expand current understandings of young people in this liminal state.
“When I arrived, I received 12kg [of maize], now I get 6kg or less and sometimes they miss things like oil. People die here and you don’t know why. Of course you can impact your life situation, but if you know you are being controlled it is hard to interfere and ask why”

Although he suggests being “controlled” it is difficult to “interfere”, Benoit does note that he and others living in the camp still have the potential to “impact” their “situation”. An idea towards which 21-year-old Lucy from DRC builds when responding to what NGOs could do to help young people with their challenges, she replies, there is, “Nothing to do, no strategy, because it depends on the individual, if they are not willing, then no strategy will work”. The introductory chapter outlined Giddens’s approach to the relationship that both Benoit and Lucy are referring. Structure and agency’s duality he proposes was described as a useful approach to understand what has since been portrayed as the relatiornality and interdependence between individuals and the structures, people, and place they live with (Punch, 2002).

Giddens’s response to his question above provides the theoretical point of departure for this chapter. He contends, a situation where social constraints are present and individuals are said to have “no choice” – as young people remarked – is not to say “action is replaced by reaction”, in the way he eloquently describes someone blinking when a rapid movement is made near the eyes (1984, p.15). He disagrees with those who would argue that such constraints work as “forces of nature” driving people “irresistibly and uncomprehendingly by mechanical pressures”. Instead, he professes that in all situations of dependence, where individuals are said to have no choice, there remains a certain amount of resources for those being subordinated to influence those “above”. Something potentially alluded to by Benoit and Lucy.

Grounded in this line of thought, Klocker (2007) proposes the notions of ‘thick’ and ‘thin’ agency to better understand how young people express agency in contexts of overwhelming constraint. Thin agency described as having limited choices and capacity for action in such contexts, thick refers to being able to act “within a broad range of options” (2007, p.85). Stressing its relational nature, she suggests an individual’s agency is on a fluid ‘continuum’ between thick and thin, where “structures, contexts, and relationships” can act as both ‘thinner’s’ or ‘thickeners’, increasing or decreasing one’s range of choices (2007, p.85); this speaks to Giddens’s argument of structure as both constraining and enabling.

The previous chapter shed light on several ‘thinners’, including, being a refugee, family size, gender, ethnicity, nationality, and the absence of refugee status. In this chapter, Klocker’s framework is employed to better understand the relationship between young people and the structures, place, and people, they live with. Her notions assist us to see the camp as a place

38 See also Dunn & Cons (2014) who propose instead the notion of ‘Burdened Agency’.
that is also enabling; how certain structures, at times constrain young people, are at others important sources of learning and thus, also thickeners. Such a framework provides a dynamic lens for instrumentalising Giddens’s ideas and for better understanding the fluid relationality of young people’s agency. This enables the argument to be built that, although young people may be expressing thin agency, – especially when they compare themselves to those living in the West – when compared to others in Dzaleka such as elder people, these expressions are perhaps ‘thicker’. Thus, critiquing Honwana’s (2014, p.38) notion that waithood is about a “lack of equity”, suggesting instead that ‘age’ can also act as a thickener and perhaps young people enacting waithood in contexts of encampment potentially have greater equity than other generational stages.

**Dzaleka: “a teacher”**

The multifaceted nature of ‘learning’ is clear in young people’s stories. On one hand it is conveyed in its ‘narrower’ sense (Punch, 2002), as formal education or institutional schooling. Such opportunities were outlined in an earlier chapter, whilst the previous one introduced us to young people’s thoughts of these, many discuss the challenges with gaining a place on such courses, others see them as a “waste of time”, not “the key to life” as Bellino (2018) finds for young people in Kakuma refugee camp still at secondary school. This is not to say such young people do not profess the importance of formal education in and of itself. But for them, the challenges of following it in Dzaleka and the inability of utilising the skills they would learn, overshadow potential benefits of attending. However, we return to this discussion in Chapter 5 where we see how, despite such challenges, some young people do see formal learning in Dzaleka as a “door” to move forwards with their lives.

Instead, explored here is another way all young people give meaning to learning in Dzaleka and this is in its broader sense; ‘informal’ learning that transpires beyond the classroom, gaining experiences, behaviour, and skills necessary for their present and future lives. Portraying the camp in this way is demonstrated by these individuals more indirectly than that of the previous chapter, but can be grasped most clearly through replies to the question: “what impact, if any, has the camp had on you these past … years living here?”. Many describe Dzaleka as a “school” or a “teacher”. The assumption made that the impact a place has on someone is intimately connected to their perception of that place. Responses to this question, supported by others, are therefore utilised to build the discussions of this chapter.

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39 Something explored in greater detail in the following chapter.
40 This phrase is to some extent misleading as several participants did not complete primary or secondary school but is useful nonetheless to demonstrate the nature of this extra-curricular learning.
Before hearing one young person’s story, it is worth highlighting how this narrative of learning, although not wholly ‘positive’ – Olivier speaking of the “harsh realities” he has learnt of being a refugee in Dzaleka or Abshir noting how a refugee “knows how the real-world works” – we can see that when compared to elder people’s comments, Dzaleka, for young people, has been and is a beneficial source of learning. The few elder people spoken to for this study noting that the camp might have provided them with peace and their children a chance of schooling, but in terms of their own development, this “prison” has not “added anything to my personality”, nor “changed me positively”, but “destroyed me… made no contribution”. As we will see, this is perhaps due to young people’s greater access to the sources of informal learning they identify and the nature of their interactions with these. With this in mind, we now turn to Arthur’s experiences of Malawi and Dzaleka since his arrival there many years ago.

Arthur’s Story

The first time I met 20-year-old Arthur from Rwanda, was in a focus group I conducted with Dzaleka’s ‘Children’s Parliament’ to gather suggestions for TiH’s new Leadership course that would include modules on children’s rights and responsibilities. Active with the group since 2015, but now too old to take part, Arthur is part of what another boy describes as the “small minority of young people” in the camp who volunteer for NGOs, currently coordinating the parliament with his fellow ex-parliamentarians. Since this first encounter, we would often see one another around camp until the second phase of the research when I asked him if he wanted to participate in the study. As we sat talking on a bench behind JWL’s computer room, Arthur shared a bit about himself.

The eldest of four siblings, Arthur and his parents arrived in Malawi from Rwanda 15 years ago, they first lived in Luwani camp before moving to Blantyre in 2008 for his father’s work, where they stayed until 2012 when they came to Dzaleka. Completing primary and then secondary school in Dzaleka, he proudly states how he was made an Information and Communications Technology (ICT) prefect in his final year. Despite wanting to go further with ICT, due to the few courses offered, he applied to, and is still working on JWL’s diploma in Business Management. Yet, of most importance for Arthur is his DAFI application concerning funding for a place he had secured on an ICT degree at the Malawian ‘Dian’ University near Lilongwe. Keeping in touch after fieldwork through WhatsApp, he explains how, still waiting for this funding to come through and risking losing his position, a friend had agreed to support

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41 Coordinated by Plan International, this group of young people up to 18-years old advocates for children’s rights within and outside of the camp, travelling to participate in ‘Parliament’ sittings in Dowa and Lilongwe where they debate and discuss with other young people from Malawi whilst meeting Malawian MPs.
him in his first year. Beginning our interview, I asked Arthur if his thoughts of Dzaleka had changed over these eight years. He replies:

“When I was young, I thought, well I always have in mind I am a refugee, but I thought of the camp as restrictions, a barrier of talents, I thought you could not achieve anything here. I was born in Rwanda, but I don’t remember it, I only know Malawi, but I am not a citizen here, it is confusing. But now I see this as an opportunity to make achievements at an international level. This camp has opportunities that I could not of got in my home country, with the skills I got here I can make achievements”

You always ‘have in mind’ you are a refugee?

“Outside the camp we are called MaBurundi, at school they used to say this to you and tell you to go back to the camp. The camp imprisons you; you shouldn’t leave it; this influences your view of the camp. Before I was worried about what I was missing not what I was gaining”

It is interesting to see how Arthur’s thoughts of Dzaleka shift over the years. Perhaps comparing being in camps to his brief stay outside them, as a young person his thoughts of Dzaleka and Luwani were of constraint. However, he now acknowledges Dzaleka’s “opportunities”, his final comment signalling this change in mindset, whilst revealing how such opportunities coexist in a space of enduring constraints. We see how Arthur’s thoughts of the camp are intertwined with how he perceives people outside see refugees. His relationships with young Malawians at primary school a source of constraint and discrimination, understanding his place to be in the camp, never to leave, forced to live in a context where one could not achieve anything. A feeling he elsewhere suggests was reinforced in his later experience of applying for Diang and being forced to pay the “foreigner” application fee despite his outcry that he had lived in Malawi nearly all his life; alluding to his earlier stated “confusion” regarding his identity. All experiences influencing his main goal of losing “the refugee box label’ as “he who is called a refugee is always discriminated against”. We return to Arthur’s attempts at losing this label in Chapter 5, something he associates with WUSC, now on his second application, admitting that even if he completes Diang he will still be “stuck” in the camp, unable to obtain a work permit.43

42 ‘Others’ impact on perception of self and place discussed further in Chapter 4.
43 In October 2020 however, Rwandan applications for WUSC 2021/22 intake from Dzaleka were rejected citing their inability to meet the criteria for refugee protection in Canada, namely facing “current and well-founded fear of return” and proving that they could not “seek protection from the authorities of their home country” (Personal communication, through Whatsapp, of rejection letter). One Rwandan participant explaining this was due to Rwanda now being declared a peaceful state by the UN.
Acknowledging the challenges Arthur mentioned, but wanting to explore what he meant by, “what I was gaining”, I asked him about any impact the camp might have had on him these years. He explains:

“It has changed me. Being in the camp is an opportunity to work with NGOs, I have learnt a lot, I was the speaker at the first Dowa Children’s Parliament, I learnt to speak for myself, this has opened doors for me. Something to add to the CV. I have lived in and out of the camp, all of it was a lesson, but if I had not been here, I would be different. If I was outside, I would not get chances like Parliament. It has given me the right friends who I benefit from. The camp has made me who I am. I live with different people, different cultures and ethnicities, so I am unique, I am able to move around, I have learnt five languages, my country’s language, and different behaviours, I learnt a lot. Outside the camp, school was good, and my father worked freely. But living in the camp is also beneficial. Being here teaches you to be creative, compared to life outside before there was just school, but now I can come up with a project and make it a reality, those outside the camp it is hard for them to do this. Young people here are limited but there are achievements, like Branches44, we just met John you remember? The camp is limited, but if you are busy with ICT or the parliament it prevents you thinking of other stuff, it keeps you occupied. All this stuff I do keeps me busy”

It is clear from Arthur’s story that his view of Dzaleka as a place of learning is strongly influenced by his participation in formal educational opportunities offered there. However, in this passage he provides a rich account of how this learning materialises differently, in a broader sense of the term. Despite stressing that wherever one is they are learning, he shows how this learning, from navigating constraints and restrictions, whilst participating in NGO’s projects and living with a diverse range of people, is specific to the camp and beneficial compared to his experiences outside. We can now go deeper into some of these points, incorporating the views and experiences of other young people in Dzaleka.

“They have raised me”

The first point to mention is the learning Arthur accounts to his long-term participation with Plan. This is two-fold, firstly through his involvement in the parliament, an experience equipping him with a solid understanding of children’s rights and what they should demand from society, whilst improving his debating and communication skills. Secondly, more recent learning by volunteering and working on their awareness raising projects. Arthur remarks, “I work with Plan, they have raised me, I can do things because of them, even if they just give a
monthly token”, and that through them he has learnt to request funds and establish a “platform” in ICT. Unlike his experiences before Dzaleka where it was, “just school”, the camp, Plan specifically, has taught him the creativity needed to turn a project into reality. Although Arthur’s participation in JWL’s diploma alludes to NGOs also as sources of ‘formal’ learning, we see – Plan “raising” him – that it is important for him to position this learning in a further manner.

Having been invited to a parliament sitting one day I was able to witness much of what Arthur had told me and importantly, what he had gone through some years prior. Driving five minutes down the road from the camp to the closest town, we arrived at a town hall that would host ‘Dowa Children Parliament’, a roundtable meeting and debate between children from the camp and Malawi, attended by the local member of parliament. Having prepared short speeches, a lengthy and passionate discussion ensued on the role of children in humanitarian action, assisted by Arthur and his colleagues who were there to support those speaking. The following week those involved were taken to the national parliament building in Lilongwe where they were given a tour and had the chance to present their concerns to leading members of parliament.

Figure 26: Dowa Children Parliament, organised by Plan International. Researcher’s photo.
Thus, NGOs clearly play a multifaceted role in camps, including that of imparting important skills beyond formal learning (Lester, 2005); this speaks to discussions highlighted earlier of humanitarian organisations taking over parental roles in such settings. Yet, despite 22-year-old Amanda from Burundi who mentions her involvement with Plan’s ‘Single Mothers’ group, learning “life skills and education about taking care of myself”, it is important to note Arthur’s views are not shared by many. More frequent comments regarding focus on NGO’s failure to “provide”, as we heard in the previous chapter. Moreover, having also grown up in Dzaleka, living there for 16 years and despite agreeing with Arthur that Plan is “raising” many young people, 23-year-old Didi from Rwanda provides an interesting account of how NGO educational approaches clash with more ‘traditional', local beliefs. She explains:

“Plan destroys youth, it says they can do everything, it teaches them about rights, so if a parent says the child must help at home the child can go to Plan and they will take the child’s side. We are raised lazy. This must change. They are keeping young people bad, they have too much freedom, the Bible says if a child is not doing the correct things the stick can help. The saying about the tree, as it is growing you can put it straight, but once it is grown it is much more difficult to put it straight. In our culture, if a child is doing Chamba [marijuana] he or she will be beaten, but then this child will go to Plan and they will take his side, they will go to the parents and tell them…”

Furthermore, hearing other young people’s experiences of volunteering, we see they do not align with Arthur’s, several speak of the boring nature of their roles, involving administrative tasks on laptops most days. Whilst bearing in mind that, although volunteering roles are predominantly taken by young people, those doing so are a minority, with places limited and competition high, one position often receiving over 300 applications (Personal communication, NGO employee). Of the 40 young people, 13 volunteer with NGOs, yet, unlike Arthur, as this chapter will go on to reveal, the majority do so either for the monthly token of appreciation it involves or because it enables them to keep busy in a context that provides little else to do. Thus, in terms of learning in its broader sense, young people have conflicting views on what can be learnt from NGOs, in particularly from Plan, an NGO with a strong child and youth focus. However, an area where these individuals find more agreement regards the learning that emerges from living with the diverse group of people inhabiting Dzaleka.

**Relationships with people, friends, and family: “A multicultural environment”**

For many young people, those they live with, the different cultures, ethnicities, and languages they come into contact with in Dzaleka, are important sources of learning that assist them to gain experiences, behaviours, and skills necessary for life. It should be noted, not only for Arthur who says he does not walk around at night as “people are attacked” – a common remark
– but for many, others in Dzaleka are also a cause of insecurity and challenges. Yet, as we will see, these more negative experiences are nevertheless still important sources of learning.

An initial aspect of this is learning about these people, their cultures, behaviours, and mindsets. Interestingly, although perhaps grounded in reality, it appears that for many young people, talking about their neighbours spoke more to cultural stereotypes they had learnt. Burundians and Rwandans often described as having farms or businesses, alluding to their longevity in Malawi, whilst the Congolese are being “helped” by the UNHCR and enjoy dancing or football; Patrick, from Rwanda, noting “Congolese like bitter vegetables, they concentrate on dress, they may not have food at home, but they will have good clothes”. However, in doing so, learning about their neighbours, young people express how they have been able to learn from them. Arthur highlights how the camp has given him the “right friends I benefit from”, a reference to the importance of peers and a point taken up in the following chapter. Yet, he goes on to say how living with different people, cultures and ethnicities have made him who he is, “unique”. Other young people echo these sentiments, David somewhat vaguely stating, “I always try to learn from my fellow refugees. Because some are really doing well, they inspire me and have shaped my history”. Others speaking of acquiring skills in sports or dance, whilst Thalia, responding to what impact the camp might have had on her these five years, offers a view like Arthur’s, whilst highlighting those visiting Dzaleka are also sources of learning:

“I changed, I grew, I was a kid, just a teenager, I got education, I appreciate that. Umm… I knew so many things, met so many people, learnt a lot from people I met. The camp is a small community, with people from everywhere, different nationalities, cultures, everything, if you put all that together you learn from one another, but it can also affect others, especially youth. Here you meet people from everywhere and you get to know them, you get to know everything, it’s a great experience. I had a friend from Senegal, I would talk to him and know things about Senegal, the dishes, he was a good cook, I would ask how you cook it. Other people I met, I learnt things from them, it’s a great experience. But still it’s stressful, you wake up, if you think about it, where you are, you’re confused with life, it’s stressful but I choose to be happy”

An interesting point that incidentally highlights an enabling characteristic of the camp where, despite being a place where one is physically confined, young people are still connected to the outside world; not only via phones and technology, but through those visiting the camp. Something perhaps more unique to younger people who have greater access to NGOs – often the focus of their projects and the ones volunteering for them – with whom visitors move around and work with but also due their improved linguistical skills compared to elder people. Beyond Thalia’s reference to sharing meals together, a clear example was visible throughout
fieldwork at the house of one boy who had a *Playstation 3* connected to a projector and various football games in particular. Described as somewhere to “just hang out” and “chill”, it is a place where numerous (male) young people could often be found, those from the camp and outsiders visiting or working in Dzaleka.

Perhaps bringing some specificity to what is being learnt from others, Arthur draws attention to the languages he has developed there compared to his time outside the camp. He says how “the camp” has taught him five languages, including his own, Kirundi, despite always living with his parents. A point reinforced by a Burundian volunteer at TiH one day when asked by a Malawian employee how she speaks so many languages, her response, “I live in a multicultural environment”. Whilst Abshir supports this by saying the “only” thing he has learnt in Dzaleka is Swahili, it should be stressed that for others, learning languages, most noticeably English, although improved by talking with peers or watching TV, is mostly done at school or JRS and therefore considered ‘formal’ learning; English described by young people in a later chapter as a “passport”, that provides them with access to NGOs and “outsiders”.

Young people’s capacities for learning languages should be pointed out as it is not a finding shared by elder people. Despite describing the numerous challenges young people face in Dzaleka, those elder highlighted their flexibility in being able to integrate more easily than themselves into “camp life”, grounded in their capacity to quickly pick-up languages; something noted in previous studies on displacement (Ball & Moselle, 2016; Hieronymi, 2009; Turner, 2006). Hieronymi (2009, p.12) maintaining that when adjusting to refugee life, the traditional scale of vulnerability is reversed with young people, before women and *then* men, as those who are, “the first to build bridges, learn the languages, and open lines of communication to the surrounding world”. Better equipped therefore, to gain access to aid workers (Tefferi, 2007) and the broader humanitarian set up.

Yet a third and perhaps most significant aspect of this learning is how young people explain they have learnt to live *with* this diverse group of people composed of different nationalities, socio-economic and cultural backgrounds. On one hand, it appears learning to live with others is about learning to use social networks as an important coping mechanism. Asking Cathy if her thoughts of Dzaleka had changed since arriving there from Congo alone nine years ago, she replies how, “Dzaleka is a school, I learnt a lot, now I know how to live with different people, how to speak with them, to be close. I have no relatives here, but I found people who can support me”. In a context where other forms of capital are wanting, one’s capacity to draw on networks of support is therefore an important buffer, that strengthens one’s ability to survive (Horst, 2006; Uzelac et al., 2018)(Uzelac et al., 2018). Something most visible and perhaps most important for those, like Cathy, who arrived in Dzaleka alone.
The constraints faced by young people living alone have been explored, yet, an important way these individuals attempt to deal with these is through the relationships they make with others living in Dzaleka.\footnote{A point Horst (2006b) stresses when discussing the continuity of livelihood practices in displacement, social networks still crucial for enabling various forms of capital, albeit through relationships with different individuals given the absence of familiar networks of support.} Crucial during their first few weeks there. Augustin took me during our walking interview to meet the woman, also Congolese, who gave him a place to sleep when he arrived, and Andrew describes a similar experience, found “wandering the camp” by a Burundian woman who brought him to her family’s house where he has since lived. The importance of such relationships persisting throughout one’s stay. Cathy goes on to say how when she has no food to feed her children, she goes to ask the neighbour, but if not, “we pass the day without” Fabien explains in his first two years:

“I would have seven or eight families I would go to on different days if I was hungry. Arriving around lunch time they would have to offer me food and I would eat. One day I would go one family then another day a different family. But this is not a good way to live”

Furthermore, although some suggest corruption and nepotism are involved when securing volunteer positions, needing to know someone is sometimes also the case for piecework. Evident later in Marc’s story where we will see how the relationships he developed with two women have enabled him to earn money and food in exchange for fetching and carrying. Nonetheless, it is clear that those living with family or having extended family in the camp can depend on perhaps more ‘reliable’ networks of support. Arthur says how he works for his father to supplement his volunteering income, Paul works on his family’s farm, Rita goes to her sister if she has no food, and Lucy shares how, “If there is no money at home, I just keep quiet and see there will be no support today. But if there is money then I can use some”. Christine states how unable to find a stable job she must depend on her parents and Francis explains how living with his mother, “Sometimes I am broke and she helps me, or sometimes I am stressed and she talks to me”. Whilst Didi mentions how next year her younger brother will finish school so he can finally start working and help her to look after their family.

However, being able to call on these familiar networks is not always sustainable and what’s more, speaking with those living alone it appears that, although their biological family cannot be replaced, they are attempting to build new assemblages of kinship in Dzaleka. Cathy shares, “We are family, I do not have parents here, but now other people seem like family, we help each other”. Marc speaks of his two mothers and Augustin, whose parents were killed when he fled DRC says how he now considers the woman who welcomed him on arrival as
his mother. Although it should not be overstressed, ideas of ‘togetherness’ or ‘community’ (Bulley, 2014; Corbet, 2015) do therefore emerge, David saying most transactions such as (illegally) buying plots do not involve paperwork but are “done on trust”, whilst Francis explains how “African culture is sharing”, and something perhaps summarised well through Abshir’s poignant remark, “We are here together, we are all prisoners”.

On the other hand, learning to live with others is as much about learning how to use relationships as important sources of support, as it is about learning how to navigate those who have the potential for causing insecurity or conflict. Relationships in Dzaleka are not always discussed in a positive light. Before meeting the Burundian woman with whom he now lives, Andrew explains that on arrival a man invited him to stay, yet, alluding to those being exploited for profit in the camp, he remarks, “they would mistreat me, I would have to prepare everything, I did not see a future there”. Nestor’s early experience of Dzaleka mirrored Andrew’s, whilst several draw attention to ethnic discrimination they face from others, they prefer to stay home instead of moving around the camp risking insult or injury. Elizabeth describes the discrimination she feels as a result of her physical disability; unable to walk without crutches, people refusing to help her. Moreover, some speak of “mistrust”, Patrick explaining Tutsi’s are often considered spies and Marie stating how “people can pretend to be your friend, but they are not”. Whilst Benoit says people are “jealous without reasons”, Loic adding, “When they see you, if your case is going well or if you are working and they see you are getting money they are jealous”. Thus, at the same time, learning to live in this heterogenous community involves acknowledging, as Thalia noted, such differences can be sources of tension and one must therefore learn how to navigate this unstable terrain. Speaking with Hermand who arrived in Dzaleka two years ago, this is explained:

“I have learnt a lot in the camp. How to be with other people, being with people from different countries you learn a lot. It is not like in London or New York where you also have people from many different countries living together, here we are all living in the same place, the same area, we share everything. The camp is a small place. Even if someone is from DRC also, they may be from a different part, like from a town or a village. It is very complicated living here. In the camp are all many different cultures, different backgrounds. All living together. All are thinking differently, you need to keep a balance, if someone else believes this, I may want to do this, but I can’t because I need to make sure the other person is ok”

Highlighting what has been discussed, Hermand agrees that a heterogenous community is an important source of learning. However, he goes on to suggest this setting is unlike cities in the West where different people live together. Confined to a “small place” and forced to share many things, in this setting, differences are also sources of “complication”. He contends one must navigate this setting, or “keep a balance”, taking into account how others are thinking or acting. Sentiments expressed by other young people. Fellow Congolese, Prince, who when showing me the places he used to play growing up in the camp these 17 years, mentions how he lives with many different types of people in the camp and, “the more I am living with them, the more I am studying them, short tempered people or selfish people I know how to handle them”. Or by Patrick who remarks that during his 18 years in Dzaleka he has learnt to respect the cultures and views of his neighbours. Andrew describes what Hermand refers to as “keeping a balance”, through the notion of being “humble”. He shares, since arriving three years ago, that he has learnt, “in the camp there are new people and new cultures, so being humble means abiding by the rules given by the people you meet and those keeping you”.

This section has briefly outlined how Dzaleka is perceived by young people as a place of learning grounded in their social relationships with others living there. Young people learning new cultures, languages and how to live with people somewhat different than themselves, this discussion is reminiscent of Malkki’s (1992) critique of sedentary or territorial approaches to identity. In a similar manner, here, young people could be seen to challenge the “national order of things”, developing what she describes as “worldiness” (1992, p.36) or cosmopolitan views and experiences (see Horst & Olsen, 2021). More recently, Ball and Moselle (2015; 2016) have extended this line of thought, portraying young people living in ‘liminal’ states of displacement as, “uniquely well suited to the demands of a globalised world” (2016, p.117). Able to learn many languages, to live with people of different ethnicities and cultures and in doing so, they suggest these young people develop “hybrid identities”, potentially embodying a new form of “global citizenship” (Ball & Moselle, 2015). Arthur’s comment, “Now I am able to move around”, potentially alluding towards this. Yet, the daily experiences of young, displaced people demonstrate that their lives are perhaps not to be idealised and this point should not be overstressed. Many in Dzaleka focus on tolerating differences instead and learning to ‘just’ cope with others living there. Nonetheless, looking to UN Development Goal 4.7\(^{47}\), it appears that young people living in Dzaleka and no doubt in many other contexts of displacement could have much to teach regarding, “appreciation of cultural diversity” and achieving broader “global citizenship” (UN Development Goal, 4.7).

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\(^{47}\) See: https://unstats.un.org/sdgs/metadata?Text=&Goal=4&Target=4.7#:~:text=Target%204.7%3A%20By%202030%2C%20ensure%20and%20non%20violence%2C%20global%20citizenship
Navigating place: “To get water in the dessert”

Yet, in young people’s stories it appears that a third and perhaps most significant source of ‘life’ learning – and something guided towards at the end of the last section – stems from the challenges they confront in Dzaleka. Here, we see how, through their navigation of these constraints, young people have learnt to “struggle”, “survive”, “cope” and “deal” with this demanding environment, learning, as one boy portrayed it, “to get water in the dessert”; all phrases alluding towards the varying degrees of resilience they are developing there. Before exploring the strategies young people use to cope, it is important to flesh out the discourse many employ regarding learning to do so in Dzaleka.

Arthur faces numerous challenges in Dzaleka. Limited choices for higher education, university funding held back, the difficulty of securing a work permit, Rwandan people’s reduced chances of being chosen for resettlement and perhaps also WUSC, and the overall refugee “box” he sees as holding him back. However, at the same time, he explains that living in this context, “teaches you to be creative”. Amongst other things, he is now in a position to create a project and source funding for it. Arthur’s choice of the word “creativity” is perhaps emblematic of his relatively better off position in the camp, seen through the nature of the constraints he describes, but also through his strong command of the English language, completion of secondary school, securing a place at a Malawian university, and holding a volunteering role; perhaps hence, one of Turner’s (1999) ‘liminal experts’. Speaking with William, who arrived more recently, five years ago, but now also pursuing higher education and volunteering, about the camp’s impact, similar notions of creativity emerge stemming from the challenges he faces there:

“Most ideas now, this place makes me think of, I mean it has challenges, so I think of ideas that can help even my country, because we also have challenges. Like the idea of having a social enterprise, I couldn’t of think of it until I was here, so yeh, this has a lot of impact on me”

However, the daily lived experiences of most young people in Dzaleka cannot be likened to those of Arthur and William. For many, stable employment is hard found, and high competition makes securing a volunteering position difficult; lacking either the social and/or economic capital to chase these limited opportunities. Nonetheless, in the stories of such young people similar themes of resilience and learning to cope with one’s, at times, overpowering context of constraint are visible, albeit expressed differently. Asking 22-year-old, mother of one, Amanda, about the camp’s impact on her these past five years, she replies, now “used” to the camp, she has learnt to deal with the problems she faces there:
“Before I used to live a better life, now in the camp, it is a school, a teacher. It has taught me even if I live with problems, I can deal with these. In the future if there are challenges, now I am used to them so I can handle them. [...] Now I know how to spend the day, just eating once, I could live in the forest now because I am used to living here”

With similar emphasis, 24-year-old Josef, from DRC, also living alone the three years he has been in Dzaleka, stresses that the challenges one “confronts” there should be seen as crucial points of learning:

“If you confront problems, you learn. If you have no problems then you just stay like that, you only hear from others. If you see problems like me… before at school I learnt, but if you don’t go through it… I learnt how to get solutions, to get water in the desert”

Here, Josef makes the distinction between learning that takes place within and beyond the classroom, placing value on the latter for its experiential nature and thus, real life implications. Moreover, taking this point further and suggesting the necessity of living the “bad” life first, is 22-year-old Marc from Burundi who explains that during his eight years in Dzaleka:

“The camp has taught me a lot. If I go abroad, I know how to face challenges. If you live the good life first it is bad, first you need to live the bad life and learn, then you can go to the good life. Before I didn’t know I could fetch or carry, today I know how to get money by doing this, I know how to survive”

Experiencing daily challenges, the “bad life” is portrayed as equipping these young people with the skills or traits needed not only to deal with such challenges, but also those they will meet in the future. Whilst speaking of the camp’s impact, 25-year-old Francis shares how the lessons he has learnt during his 10 years in Dzaleka would not have been possible if he and his family had stayed in Rwanda:

“Rwanda is huge, there are chances and opportunities. But when you are in a small place like this, you mostly take what is around. So here you need to fight harder to get those. It is a small place, and many people want those chances, there is competition, you have to fight hard, to be determined. I think I have the spirit of determination, I feel if I was out in Rwanda I wouldn’t maybe even have a degree, because it is like umm, you know when you have things you don’t use them mostly? Here you have to fight hard for it. I think this kind of life is like a school, it is like an education, extra education”

Situating the camp as a place of constraint compared to his previous life in Rwanda, Francis explains he must “fight hard” to access opportunities in Dzaleka and doing so has taught him to be “determined”, now having a degree because of this, his ultimate comment eloquently
surmising the point at hand. Such excerpts are revealing for demonstrating how young people, in response to the challenges they confront, have learnt to be creative, determined, to get solutions, and deal with such constraints. However, lacking in these, except perhaps in Marc’s comment, is a closer reflection on exactly how young people are learning to cope with this “bad” life. Thus, in what remains of the chapter, I take a closer look at some of the various strategies and tactics young people draw upon during their time in Dzaleka.

The previous section touched on the importance of social networks for coping and it was highlighted how this is especially so for those living alone and unable to rely on family support. Continuing this trend, we see, perhaps also due to the absence of familiar networks, it is predominantly young people without family or those who do but must provide for them – often being the eldest sibling – who mention participating in income generating activities to cope.

Of the 40 young people, nine boys and five girls mention that they rely on informal piecework – activities paid per piece or labour completed – to survive. Marc explains how he decided, “I will not steal, so to survive, you need to work”, and this materialises for him through carrying items and fetching water. Whilst Innocent shares that, now used to “this life” and with “no other choice, I must cope”, doing so by making bricks and building houses. Whereas the five girls speak of cleaning people’s houses, selling food items such as nuts or Mandazis and participating in sex work, to which we return shortly. Nationality appears not to be a considerable factor, of these 14, nine are without family in Dzaleka, three have one sibling and two have a parent; Atu, still needs to support her younger siblings and father who is often absent drinking. It is interesting to hear how one young person, Prince, who has lived in the camp for 17 years, suggests time in Dzaleka impacts whether one is involved in these activities. As we passed some young boys building a wall of a house during our walk around the camp, he explained:

“I find I can control myself in this environment, I have experience in this area, when I am hungry, I know what to do. I know that this guy needs help, no matter what kind of help, maybe building house and I am passing by, I have no choice, I help him. I feel like someone who is a newcomer won’t do this, think it is dirty work. I know what needs to be done and do it”

Although this is a revealing portrayal of how newcomers are perhaps seen by those who have spent longer in Dzaleka, data is lacking to expand the discussion. Moreover, it is unclear how many days, months, or years a “newcomer” must have. Only Estella in Dzaleka less than a year and she had attempted to sell nuts and Mandazis before stopping after a lack of success and being able to fall back on extended family with whom she lives; it is unclear however if this is “dirty work”. Furthermore, even those who are relatively newer, arriving under five years
ago, are doing piecework, perhaps due more to the fact many came alone and must therefore “do it all”, as Loic noted in the previous chapter.

Nonetheless, clearly, such activities are neither unique to young people nor those living in the camp. Yet, the piecework performed by two participants are perhaps more specific to young people in Dzaleka. Arriving at his home after our walking interview, 24-year-old Josef from DRC, with no family in the camp, began telling me about TiH’s photography class he did then proceeded to take out some photos he had taken of Dzaleka Hills. He explains, “If I can find someone like you, the money I make from selling one can last the whole month, spending small, small, small”. I was able to witness this in Lilongwe on two occasions when attending art exhibitions and finding Josef there presenting his work which was also for sale. Young people’s greater access to both NGOs for short courses and outsiders through their linguistical abilities demonstrating the nuanced nature of this work. Furthermore, also stemming from his completion of a short course is the ‘remote work’ 25-year-old Francis from Rwanda, living with his mother, does on his laptop. He remarks:

“Since now there are remote works, you can just get paid through the internet, so that is how I make it mostly. Making websites, a company can give me work, I told you about Tata Malawi, the cars, you seen it? I helped with their website, a simple template. That’s how I get around it. Internet has made it easy for such work, for people like us”

Alluding to a different set of linguistical skills, Francis shows how young people, developing a more ‘modern’ skill set, are able to transgress the binary of an open or closed camp (Grayson, 2017), now able to cope or “make it” by doing so, given the lack of other opportunities in the camp; whilst bringing new meaning to the term ‘digital nomad’. Yet, it should be noted that both these strategies are not accessible to all, many lacking the linguistical or technological knowhow and equipment, whilst unable to secure one of the few places for short courses.

Beyond piecework, others, again, mostly without family in the camp, are involved in ‘formal’ employment. Laura, for example describes Dzaleka as “another reality”, finding herself dependent on the UNHCR and like Arthur, limited by the refugee label. She works instead of completing her education, employed at the camp’s bank, she uses the money to provide basic necessities for herself and her three younger sisters with whom she lives. Others run their own enterprises, Fabien for example, 23 years old, from DRC and living alone, manages a tailoring shop with his friends, helping him to “deal with the camp”, no longer going to different houses for food. Whilst 28-year-old Olivier from Burundi, recently married with a new-born, goes each day to set up his food stall at the camp’s daily market. Describing how, after arriving in the camp three years ago with no family, unable to continue education and facing ethnic discrimination, his goal became “to survive”, the stall now allowing him to, “feed my family”.

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Volunteering for NGOs can perhaps also be considered ‘formal’ employment and more unique to such a setting. Unable to ‘legally’ be employed, individuals become ‘volunteers’, receiving not a monthly ‘salary’ like their Malawian colleagues, but a ‘token of appreciation’. Although those volunteering in Dzaleka, much like other settings (Turner, 2006), are mostly young people – 15 young people involved in the study volunteering – as noted, these are a minority; required to have completed secondary school and needing social capital – “to know someone” – to secure a position. Clearly, for all, the monthly token provides an important source of income assisting them to cope. Ada explains how previously cleaning for an NGO had enabled her to provide for her child and sister’s child, whilst Loic shared in the previous chapter how guarding an NGO compound means that, without family to support him, the income helps him to deal with the challenges of being alone. However, we also see that regardless of whether someone has family in the camp, motivations for volunteering are more multifaceted than the previous activities, young people volunteer not only to ‘just’ cope; something expanded upon in due course through the notion of “keeping busy”. Furthermore, as discussed earlier, many do not speak as positively of volunteering as Arthur, describing it as “boring”, some suggesting the token meets only “basic necessities”, Arthur himself supplementing this by working for his father.

However, as shown, opportunities for making an income in Dzaleka are limited and piecework cannot always be counted on for daily persistence. Marc says how some days “I can spend the whole day with no job” and Benoit explains he can only go to cut hair if they let him use their machine and if there is electricity to do so. Accordingly, many, regardless of the social characteristics discussed, explain they must rely on the monthly food distribution to survive. As Marc poignantly states in the next chapter, all he had been doing since our last interview was, “just surviving with food distribution”. Despite the plethora of comments building a discourse of inadequacy and critique towards it, this monthly ‘receiving’, is also seen by many as vital for coping. Francine says it “provides for all, no matter the origin”, Josef explains, “it is everything for us”, and, speaking after our walk, David adds:

“I have drawn this biggest [labelled ‘food’ below] because everyone goes there, 95% of people in camp rely on it for food. It helps 40,000 people in the camp, if you don’t go you won’t be safe that month”
It is important to note that some young people find alternative mechanisms to cope, ways often portrayed as ‘harmful’, ‘disruptive’ or ‘negative’ by humanitarian organisations’ (see Evans et al., 2013). Speaking with Dzaleka’s Chief of Police about the camp’s security challenges, he remarks, “the more food rations are reduced, the more theft and sex work increase”; adding that although young men occasionally steal solar panels off roofs or break into people’s houses, it is mostly younger boys aged 10 to 15 who steal, often at the Tuesday market. Clearly young people were less willing to speak about any ‘illicit’ coping strategies they may be involved in. Without elaborating, Abshir did mention that with no jobs and receiving only 6kg of maize, “You have to do illegal shit under the radar, if there is no support then you have to do whatever to survive”. Another young person shares how during his first few months in the camp he participated in the Ethiopian human trafficking business, providing a place for migrants to stay whilst transiting through Dzaleka. Moreover, many mention how girls use sex work to make a living in the camp. Josef explaining how some girls, “are in a house, people come with money for sex, many houses like that”.

Lacking in the earlier discussion on social relationships was this role of more ‘sexual’ or ‘romantic’ relationships for coping. Before meeting two Rwandan girls separately, 19-year-old Atu who has lived her whole life in Dzaleka and 18-year-old Rita who arrived three years ago, Nelson explained they were sex workers, renting two rooms to do so not far from his house. Clearly this did not surface in interviews and was not asked for the potential distress such a
question could cause. Rita, suggests, in response to a question about the opportunities available to young girls in the camp, that, “It depends on each of them. If they are with their family, they ask for money, but if they are alone, they can’t ask, in that case they need to use bad methods to make money”. Whilst Rita, living alone, must provide all for herself, Atu, despite living with her family, must provide for her younger siblings and recent child, given the absenteeism of their and her child’s father. Furthermore, pertaining to ‘romantic’ relationships, after speaking with 19-year-old Elisabeth from Burundi, who arrived in Dzaleka just over a year ago with her elder sister, and 23-year-old Cathy from DRC, living alone with her three children, Nelson shared that they had both refrained from telling us about their boyfriends on whom the first relies for paying rent and both rely for “basic necessities”. He explained that going to Elizabeth’s house the day prior to speak with her, he found her sister who said they had fallen out over the boyfriend’s presence in her house, Elizabeth therefore moving out to a room now paid for by this boy.

Clearly, insufficient data was gathered to fully understand the dynamics of these relationships and the validity can only be taken from Nelson’s word. Nonetheless, such stories support the idea that in contexts where resources are limited, sexual relationships can become important means of supplementing livelihood options (Chant & Evans, 2010). However, at least for Elisabeth and Cathy, such relationships perhaps go beyond “simple commercial exchanges”, potentially involving, “continuing and reciprocal obligations between partners that include gifts, support, and services, and may involve personal affection” (Honwana, 2012, p.89).

Discussing these interviews some days later, Nelson suggested that Elisabeth and Cathy had not told us about their boyfriends, despite not being asked, to “increase their chances of being helped”. A comment, if accurate, that draws attention to their (or Nelson’s) perception of me as someone who could potentially “help”, but also speaks to the broader relationship between people living camps and visitors coming to these places (see Carpi, 2019). In contexts of encampment where resources are limited and resettlement highly visible, Jansen (2008, p.576) contends vulnerability can become a resource, an opportunity, where gaining access to “help” depends on one’s ability to negotiate or instrumentalise their stories and identity – “the essential resource for refugees” – to achieve their interests.

The importance of having the ‘right’ story is something Jansen (2008, p.578) goes on to express and was first brought to my attention in Dzaleka by a Burundian volunteer for TiH one day as we walked past the RSD unit. Asking her about this small office, she said it is where you go on arrival to “tell your story”. She added that their “case” had been rejected three times before recently being accepted, now having refugee status after 15 years waiting. She went on to say this was because her father “didn’t know how to lie”, explaining, “there are experts
in the camp who you pay, they write out your story and say, you should say this when you go for your meeting”. Elsewhere, discussing the camp’s large Congolese population with a senior volunteer for an implementing partner, also Congolese, he suggests, “people change their stories [...] you will see, all those arriving now are from DRC”. Alluding to the common belief that Congolese people have higher chances of being resettled and perhaps why when we first spoke with Elisabeth and Rita, despite being from Burundi and Rwanda as Nelson later informed me, they both said they were from DRC.

It appears therefore that changing your story and utilising more ‘vulnerable’ categories can be seen as another way of coping, or perhaps even achieving one’s interests. In the recent WUSC (2019, p.25) report for Dzaleka, a 31 year old man remarks how the UNHCR’s focus on helping those they define as vulnerable means many refuse assistance to ensure they meet this prerequisite and increase their chances of resettlement. He added that if the UNHCR were to “recognise” those who help the community, the effects would be more “productive”, and “self-reliance” achieved. Zetter (1991) speaks of the issues with labelling as prescribing assumed needs of a group, who must then meet these and conform to the label to achieve their interests. This means that whilst policy may aim for self-reliance, it may end up increasing dependency.

Two encounters with 25-year-old Francis from Rwanda help to amplify this point. During our first interview I asked Francis if he ever thought he would return to Rwanda, he replied, “I wish really bad. It is my country and I want to go back, but I can’t tell that to the UNHCR”, and one day seeing him driving a car through the camp, asking him why he drives the short distance from the NGO compound where he volunteers to the camp, he remarked, “my legs are too tired to walk, don’t you know we walked all the way from Rwanda!”.

“Keeping busy”

So far, this chapter shed light on a narrative of learning young people employ when giving meaning to their experiences of Dzaleka. One that emerges from their thoughts of Dzaleka’s impact on them over the years. Grounded in three sources of ‘life’ learning young people identify, we saw that in their own words they have learnt to ‘survive’, ‘struggle’, ‘deal’ and ‘cope’ with the context of constraint described in the previous chapter. Accordingly, this final part of the chapter has attempted to flesh out how these young people are coping. To conclude, it is important to discuss one final coping strategy, alluded to by Laura in the previous chapter when she spoke of “still gaining by being busy” despite not using the skills she has learnt, and that is the importance many young people place on “keeping busy” in Dzaleka; an emic praxis – incorporating several of the aforementioned activities – grounded not only in their navigation of several constraints, but speaking also to their broader experiences of waiting and thus, a useful term for understanding how waithood is enacted by young people in this context.
Firstly, we can see how this praxis is another way young people have learnt to cope with place and thus, a direct response to having “nothing to do” as mentioned in the previous chapter. In Arthur’s narrative he tells us, “The camp is limited” and that being “busy” with ICT, the Children’s Parliament or JWL, keeps him occupied, preventing him from “thinking of other stuff”. Asking him to say a bit more about this, he replies:

“Being busy prevents you going deep. If you are idle, you think and make decisions that aren’t appropriate. There are people here doing drugs, to prevent all this you need to keep busy”

On one level, being busy to avoid “going deep” was echoed by other young people in terms of avoiding thinking of the experiences that brought them to Dzaleka. Francis mentions, “It is important to be busy in a place like this because you don’t want to have all those stresses from home while you are here” and Laura explains, “People in the camp have fled their countries, so here they are thinking of what happened, they can lose hope and it can even result in suicide. Doing something can remove these thoughts”. Augustin states, “Congolese people have trauma, they like music and dancing to disappear that”. Whilst Fabrize, responding to my question about his experiences before Dzaleka, shares:

“The history… I have a long history, is confidential, somehow not good. We are living here nine years in camp, my past was not so good, so that is why I want to focus on what I want to achieve, I want to make a difference, focus, to not get confused”

For Fabrice, concentrating on his aspirations enables him to maintain “focus” and not get “confused” thinking of his past. However, participants explain that going “deep” can also refer to thinking of one’s present situation in Dzaleka. A point made clear in this dialogue with Benoit:

What do you do in your free time?

“When I have free time, I go and watch the football or go to the UN to check the notification board or do other games. All to keep the mind busy”

Why is it important to keep the mind busy?
“It is important because here in the camp, if you do not have a job, there are too many negative thoughts... when you have no solutions to your problems. I have a wife and a baby to care for, I think, how can I feed them, but I can't find a solution, so I need to go look, keep busy, at least over time I find the day has gone”

Thus, for Benoit, if he does not keep his mind busy with other tasks such as checking his case with the UNHCR or watching football – something many others (young men) also mention as their “distraction” – it is easy for him to start thinking of his present challenges in Dzaleka. Olivier speaks about going to church to forget his stress, whilst Didi explains how, although many “watch football to be distracted”, her favourite time of the year is Refugee Day and Tumaini music festival, events which make her happy and help her to forget her problems. For a few, formal learning is another way to keep busy. Josef for example, speaks of his first few weeks in Dzaleka as stressful, missing his family and spending most days crying. Seeing he needed to be doing something to “distract” him from this and hearing about TiH’s vocational classes at church one day, he soon applied and was accepted for a photography class.

Amanda remarks on her use of schoolwork as a way of preventing conflict with others, stating that if she is busy with this, she can avoid, “just moving around the camp”, where people gossip, and conflicts can surface. A point also alluded to by William who explains how on arrival he met people who told him “bad things” about Dzaleka, how people lived, how long they had been there and the “dangers” they face, accordingly:
“I tried to think of ways to avoid all those things. My focus was education. I knew, if I am busy, I will not be thinking about the bad things, I could forget about the dangers. Like I showed you, after two weeks I joined JRS, after that there was another short course in child protection, I wasn’t really interested but I was like ok I want to be busy. Of course, I didn’t say that in the interview. I just wanted to be busy”

It is interesting to note that although his participation in this formal learning may have been guided by his aspirations for pursuing his education, we can see an underlying motivation pushing him and those mentioned before to do so was this need for keeping busy; keeping them physically and mentally away from the “dangers” of the camp. A point Laura also makes regarding her employment, explaining, “Problems can happen in the camp, but because I am always at work, these can’t happen to me”.

However, keeping busy is also described as important for ensuring one does not get involved in potentially harmful activities. Arthur states, “If you are idle you think and make decisions that are not appropriate”, whilst a boy, stopping at Jemma’s shop to buy a drink, interrupting our interview, shared how, “young people want to keep busy, they want a plan, if they are not busy then they can drink alcohol like water”. Describing his experiences of growing up in Dzaleka, Patrick pointed to his neighbour’s house during our walking interview, he shared how he used to play with the children living there. However, as they got older and some began drinking, he saw he needed to stay away. Later taking me to the “cinema” he would go every day after school to watch movies on a TV, he explains how coming here he would have no time for meeting these friends, “saving me from alcohol”.

It should be noted that for some young people, participating in more ‘illicit’ or ‘harmful’ activities are their distractions and ways of keeping busy; Patrick for example goes on to say how doing this each day he had no time for homework and he fell behind at school, but is a point demonstrated more clearly in the following chapter through Marc’s story and his involvement with alcohol and substance abuse; something he is trying to reduce by also distracting himself with movies. Nonetheless, other young people speak of different distractions to keep them from harmful activities. During our walk and stopping at the JRS ‘Game Centre’ where boys were playing drafts with bottlecaps, Innocent shares:

“I like this place because I can waste my time here and it prevents us from doing other evil things. […] You can’t just walk around, if you walk around you can find people who may peer pressure you. But if you play games, you cannot get involved in this”

Prince’s distraction is basketball, helping him to avoid conflict and keep him from “temptations”: 
“It releases stress, it is a way of escaping temptations. I do it because it occupies me, if I wasn’t there, I would be at home maybe fighting with neighbours. Playing sport, my mind is on sport, but when I am home, I focus on education. Education is the target and sport is a distraction”

Thus, for many, regardless of how and why they do so, keeping busy is another important strategy helping them to navigate the challenges of living in Dzaleka. We see how this praxis, incorporating several of the aforementioned activities, exists beyond those as a broad, all-encompassing way young people are coping; assisting them to avoid the past, the present, keep away from conflicts and distract them from harmful activities. Moreover, although the two are intimately related, it is clear that unlike the earlier activities which focus on coping in a more financial sense – perhaps with the exception of social and romantic relationships and changing your story – keeping busy is essential for coping ‘mentally’ in this environment. Yet, despite grounded as a response to certain constraints, I contend that the need for “keeping busy” also speaks to young people’s experiences of ‘waiting’ in the camp.

Employed by many to explain their actions, I argue, this emic praxis of keeping busy is a useful frame for understanding young people’s multifaceted experience of waiting in Dzaleka and therefore, their enactment of waithood in this context. The utility of which stemming not only from its origins as a response to numerous constraints48, but how the process of keeping busy is intimately linked to their understanding of Dzaleka as a temporary stage or “bridge” from which they are waiting to move on, and therefore, a term resonant with settings of displacement. It is thus a nuanced conceptual framing device for rethinking the relationship between young people and their expressions of agency in contexts of encampment, assisting us, in the chapters that follow, to gain new insights into the camp.

As outlined in the introductory chapter, several urban and male-centric studies have discussed young people enacting waithood through various expressions of agency. These include: ‘Dubriagem’ or ‘Social Navigation’ (Vigh, 2006; 2010), ‘Straining’ (Finn & Oldfield, 2015), ‘Hustling’ (Thieme, 2018) or displaced Eritreans ‘voting with their feet’ (Grabska, 2020). Terms that articulately point to young people expressing ‘dynamic’ or ‘productive’ forms of waithood to navigate ‘social death’ (Vigh, 2006) as opposed to ‘deficient’ ideas of individuals ‘passively lingering’ (Honwana, 2012); all draw attention to over-arching contexts of constraint. A limited number of studies have explored waithood in displacement (Belloni, 2020; Grabska, 2020; McEvoy-Levy, 2014; Singerman, 2007) and are useful for revealing its multifaceted nature in this context (Grabska, 2020), but are not located in settings of encampment. A notable exception includes, Bellino (2018) who explores waithood in Kakuma, but, as it focusses on

48 Therefore, despite its first sonance, the term cannot be accused of overlooking a context of constraint.
formal education, it is limited in scope for overlooking those who do not place importance on this and learning’s broader manifestations that we have seen in this chapter.

We heard how young people, in their own words, are learning to “cope”, “survive” and “struggle”, terms which align with these urban praxes. A conceptual overlap unsurprising at a time when long-term camps are becoming approached through the lens of urbanisation (Woroniecka-krzyzanowska, 2019, see Agier et al., 2002). However, grounded in the Middle East, this urban shift has been critiqued for being unable to account for the remaining presence of humanitarian institutions managing these places; ‘humanitarian urbanism’ (Jansen, 2015) offered as a more apt lens. Moreover, although these terms are useful for revealing young people expressing ‘thin’ agency (Klocker, 2007) in what, at times is an overwhelming context of constraint, they are perhaps insufficient for fully capturing the further narrative of “waiting to leave” young people are employing in Dzaleka and the temporality it implies.

Limited waithood studies have addressed this temporality. Jeffrey (2010) reveals how young, educated men in India experience chronic waiting as “surplus” time, not passively but actively navigated through ‘timepass’, meeting and chatting with other young men who have been “left behind”. Masquelier (2013) describes how young Nigerien men “enliven” time through daily tea rituals. Not “wasting time” as elder people suggest but carving out “meaningful temporalities” to counter the “crushing weight of boredom”, and orient themselves towards the future in a context of few other temporal markers (Masquelier, 2013, p.487). A study arguably grounded in Ralph’s (2008) study of young men in the same context “killing time”. “Keeping busy” speaks to these praxes, bringing the temporality of waithood and waiting to the forefront, whilst stressing their productive and embodied enactments. As Ralph (2008, p.15) remarks for “killing time”, I argue that young people’s use of “keeping busy” has a meaning beyond being conditional or circumstantial as it is perhaps considered in a minority world setting, i.e. filling up time until an upcoming event or activity. Instead, it appears that young people employ this term to guide the listener to their portrayals of Dzaleka as both a place of constraint and one of waiting. Where keeping busy is something all must do daily to navigate their ‘protracted uncertainty’ (Horst & Grabska, 2015), this context that hinders and constraints, but at the same time offers a way out at the end of the bridge. We find waiting therefore, defined not by its instant, but by what it is not, “by the past and the future, by memory and anticipation” (Schweizer, 2005, p.789).

49 The latter point crucial to bear in mind as we explore the notion of young people ‘waiting’ in Dzaleka, for as Masquelier (2013) explains, waiting cannot be reduced to a passive experience of suffering but must be understood as a “tactical mode of life” (Makhulu 2010) out of which young people generate meaningful temporalities.

50 Similar ideas echoed in research into asylum detention centres, Turnbull (2015) also describing people there ‘passing time’, whilst Mathews (1999) speaks of those in prison ‘doing’ or ‘killing time’; contexts, with much overlap
However, unlike these previous studies of waithood where a group of young men (except Grabska, 2020) all experience waiting in a similar manner, in Dzaleka, we see that within this broad praxis of keeping busy, young people, boys and girls, express their agency, relationships, goals and aspirations in differing ways. As Francis remarks, “we all have different definitions of being busy”, and this chapter has gone some ways in revealing, not only some of the different embodied practices young people are involved in to keep busy, but also their shared, underlying reasons for doing so. Yet, as the following chapters demonstrate, keeping busy is further nuanced by young people depending on how they give meaning to waiting in Dzaleka, on this “bridge". While some (Chapter 4) see their waiting as “stuckness”, unable to move forwards with their lives, others (Chapter 5), despite also waiting to leave, are “making sense” and taking steps to “build” themselves whilst waiting. Whilst one group is keeping busy in the sense of coping with a ‘place’ of constraint and a protracted ‘time’, for others, despite coping with these as well, we see that keeping busy is also grounded in the idea of taking steps to move forwards with one’s life whilst in Dzaleka; distinguishing this term from the way ‘timepass’, ‘enlivening’ or ‘killing time’ are employed. To flesh out these differences, in each ensuing chapter I expand the praxis of keeping busy by engaging with Lister’s (2004) concepts of ‘getting by’ and ‘getting out’.

Concluding remarks

This chapter has attempted to shed light on a further way young people give meaning to their lived environment in Dzaleka. As a response to the previous chapter, we have seen how the narrative explored here is very much grounded in one of constraint, young people actively learning to cope with the challenges they confront in the camp. A more ‘productive’ enactment of waithood emerging to the one described previously. Yet, what young people have learnt from NGOs, from their relationships with people and place, and the embodied practices and coping strategies emerging from these, can in many ways be considered expressions of ‘thin’ agency (Klocker, 2007). A point reinforced in the following chapter where we hear young people comparing themselves to those from Malawi and further afield. Nonetheless, these individuals, perhaps more ‘open’ to these sources of learning and potentially with greater access to them, and compared to elder people whose “camp life” has been relatively shorter (Hieronymi, 2009), this learning positions young people as individuals who express ‘thicker’ agency (Klocker, 2007) than those around them; better able to speak the “language of the camp” (Turner, 2006). Countering Honwana’s (2014) premise by suggesting young people potentially have greater equity and thus, nuancing waithood for a context of encampment. However, clearly, as Jeffrey (2010) notes, such a portrayal should not be romanticised. For, to camps, where one is anticipating crucially important life-altering decisions and experiencing waiting as uncertain, unpredictable and seemingly unending (Turnbull, 2015).
as Arthur concludes, even if he completes Diang university, he will still be “stuck” in the camp, unable to obtain a work permit to utilise the skills he may have learnt.

Thus, in this thesis so far, we have unpacked two narratives all young people, in different times and spaces, and to varying degrees, employ in their stories of Dzaleka. Now, with these in mind, it is interesting, and the goal of the penultimate chapters, to take a closer look at the ‘waiting’ underlying young people’s experiences of Dzaleka, zooming in on how this temporary “bridge” materialises for different young people. Instrumentalising the emic praxis of keeping busy, each chapter reveals how waiting is not given meaning to nor experienced in the same way by all. Whilst those in the following chapter ground their bridge in a narrative of constraint, and thus, keep busy with a view of ‘getting by’ (Lister, 2004), waiting to leave the camp to move forwards with their lives, those in the final analytical chapter have understood the issues with waiting for resettlement and are instead attempting to “build” themselves in the camp, keeping busy in the sense of ‘getting out’ (Lister, 2004), they see Dzaleka as a place where they can move forwards with their lives. What unfolds can therefore bring new light to discussions of young people in waithood – it reveals how some believe they can wait for a solution to be provided for them, whilst others enact a more dynamic waithood, using the camp as a nodal point to build their lives – and in doing so, expand existing understandings of the ‘camp’.
Chapter 4: “Counting the days”

“Waiting is a consciousness of time embodied, of time endured” (Schweizer, 2005, p.282)

As their broad and multifaceted experience of encampment – and a lens lacking in existing camp studies – waiting not only to leave, but to ‘become’ and make the transition into social adulthood, in this penultimate chapter we examine how the majority of young people who participated give meaning to ‘waiting’ in Dzaleka. We see their view grounded in constraint (Chapter 2), perceiving themselves as stuck and unable to move forwards with their lives whilst remaining in the camp. For these individuals, physical and social (inter-generational) mobility go hand in hand, and it is only when (not if) they will be chosen for resettlement and cross over this bridge, that they can make the transition.51 In the initial section, we see how their waiting is first and foremost portrayed as “stuckness”. Grounded in a narrative of constraint, these young people suggest they cannot move forwards with their lives because, on one hand they are not in control of their futures, and on the other, they cannot become “someone” whilst living in Dzaleka. Building from this, the second section examines how these individuals also give meaning to their waiting through the notion of “patience”. They acknowledge they cannot move forwards with their lives whilst in Dzaleka, and contend they must accept this, be patient and wait for resettlement; alluding to Schweizer’s quote above of waiting as “time endured”.

The third section shifts to waiting in its more experiential form, it explores how these young people express agency in waiting and thus, enact their waithood. Employing an etic lens of ‘getting by’ to examine how and why they “keep busy”, we see their waithood differs from those in the following chapter, those here coping with time and place until they are resettled. A fourth and final section highlights a contradiction visible in these stories. We find that whilst their thoughts of waiting may evoke notions of stuckness, at the same time, through the ways they have learnt to cope, they are ‘partially’ transitioning into a social adulthood they define. The chapter therefore argues for a more nuanced view of camps as places of constraint, young people’s stories highlight that whilst these challenges are ever-present and shaping their experience of Dzaleka, the somewhat unique opportunity camps provide for onwards physical mobility mean that despair goes hand-in-hand with hope and many young people see themselves as ‘just’ able to ‘get by’ until this materialises. To ground these discussions, we begin by hearing 22-year-old Marc’s story of Dzaleka since his arrival there eight years ago.

51 Whilst this chapter echoes themes raised in Chapter 2, the purpose here is to go beyond a well-documented portrayal of encampment as constraint. Instead, by focussing on young people’s narrative of waiting, it seeks to demonstrate how their underlying experience of encampment is not only about stuckness and uncertainty, but also materialises through patience, an active navigation of protracted time and place of constraint, and crucially, through the hope this setting provides young people for escaping their waithood and moving forwards with their lives.
Not long into our first interview on the steps of a store selling maize where many go to buy what the monthly Mapokezi fails to provide, an elderly Malawian woman approached Marc, Nelson and myself asking for money. Three months and still struggling with how best to manage people’s perceptions of me and having given this same woman money on a previous occasion, I joined Nelson in declining. Getting up, Marc approached the trader and placing money on the counter, received change in return. After giving some to the lady, she went on her way, and we continued our interview. This exchange had a great impact on me, leaving me with guilt for refusing the lady and for my first impressions of Marc.

Explaining to Nelson some days earlier that many participants so far were swayed more to participating in formal educational opportunities – stemming from the relative linguistical ease of communication – he said he knew a boy living near him who spends much time drinking with his friends and that we could speak with him. Our first attempt to interview Marc did not go to plan, as, arriving at midday, we found him passed out on a bench by a bar. Returning at an earlier time a few days later he agreed to participate.

Marc, his grandmother and two younger siblings arrived in Dzaleka in 2011 having fled Burundi and hearing “the UNHCR helps people” there through resettlement. On arrival, despite his shock at the way people lived, he knew he could not go back, “so I decided to stay and wait for help”, thinking his stay would be short. For four years, he and his family remained, moving no closer to being “helped”, until in 2015 they received refugee status. He explains, “That was when I decided to stay because anytime I could now get chosen for resettlement”. Still waiting, in our two interviews and one walk and talk, Marc spoke about his experiences of Dzaleka.

Not mentioning his family, he explains how he currently sleeps at different friends’ houses, “one night there, another here”. His main concerns regard the lack of opportunities to find stable employment and that, because of this, young people, especially those living alone, can go days without eating, the monthly 6kg of maize insufficient. Thus, with nothing to do in Dzaleka but wait for the UNHCR’s decision, he said soon after his arrival he started drinking and can no longer stop, needing just 200 Malawian Kwacha (MWK) (20p) to drink all day. During our walking interview, Marc showed Nelson and I ‘his’ camp, which, starting at the bar where we initially found him, took us past where his friend grows marijuana, to the inside of a dark, smoky bar in Blantyre, a zone in the camp where “you can always find me”, filled with young and old men drinking homemade banana beer in plastic containers.
However, other than revealing the consequences of keeping young men confined to a place with limited avenues for providing for themselves, this walk also shed light on how Marc attempts to cope with this challenging environment, notably through networks of support. Demonstrated through his peers, whose houses he sleeps at and with whom he spends much of the day, his friend the dealer who facilitates much of this and two elderly women who we stopped to talk with. Each his “mother”, yet not biologically so, they provide food in exchange for fetching water. Adding in our second interview some months later how, although going days with no work, on others he “lifts” and “carries”, “[I] need to work to get money. I decided I won’t steal, so to survive, you need to work”.

Whilst frequently finding Marc and his peers drinking at their friend’s bar, throughout fieldwork I would also see these young men participating in different activities Marc later described as piecework. I highlight this as to avoid a representation of these individuals as people who are, in their own words, actually “doing nothing”. Marc for example, could often be found in line at the borehole and Nestor would spend his evenings working for a man who owned a small stall selling cooked meat. Such activities are fleshed out in a later section that focuses on how these young people are ‘getting by’ in Dzaleka.

In our first interview, through Nelson, I ask Marc his thoughts for the future. Although poignantly remarking, “I could die this year, to plan for five years is something I can’t do”, he explained he wants, “to marry, have a wife and make a family”. Stating “piecework is not useful” and he would prefer a job that “is useful to humanity”. He adds that what he and his friends really want is to “drop this life in the camp” and find, “a better life, we want to change this life”. Asking him what this may look like he says:

“Here in the camp, there is no better life. So, it means living elsewhere. I wish for resettlement, the life there is good, a life without stress. There is no support here, we lack everything. Organisations can’t help, Plan is corrupt, they give jobs to friends or relatives”

Returning to speak with Marc at the end of fieldwork, I ask him what he had been doing since we last spoke. To which he replies, “Just in the camp, waiting. No work here, just surviving with food distribution. Now the rain has come it is more difficult because people just get water off rooves”. He mentioned how he had reduced his drinking, now spending most of his time watching movies in the camp’s small cinema, no longer going to Blantyre as often since the death of two of his friends – “Drinking all day you don’t have money for eating”. Just passing his eighth year in Dzaleka, Marc concludes:
“All is simple. I just think to be here, ready for any decision, it is only the UNHCR that can make the decision. They help, but they can’t help everyone at the same time. I can’t know for how long I will wait. Even if I haven’t got it yet, it will come. Until then I will just be doing some jobs and thank God each day. I will thank God the day I wake up and go… I am tired of this life. I wish to go abroad”

Exploring Marc’s story with inputs from others, the chapter now attempts to flesh out how this first group of young people give meaning to their waiting in Dzaleka. To do so, it is important to firstly draw attention to the dominant narrative of constraint grounding their thoughts and experiences of waiting.

Although earlier chapters saw many young people describe the challenges they confront in the camp, it is visible that, and as shown through Marc’s story – “there is no support here, we lack everything” – the portrayal of waiting we hear in this chapter finds its foundations in the stories of young people that are particularly grounded in over-arching views of Dzaleka as a constraint. How the camp materialises as such in the lives of different young people has been discussed and is therefore not repeated here but visible throughout. What follows is instead an examination of the further discourses that emerge when young people predominantly employ this narrative in their stories of Dzaleka; revealing how and why the meaning they give to waiting, and their experience of this, differs from that discussed in the ensuing chapter.

Stuckness

The first and perhaps, most clear way these young people portray their waiting is through the notion of “stuckness”, and being thus, they contend they cannot move forwards with their lives whilst living in Dzaleka. Grounded in their view of the camp as a place where one cannot achieve their aspirations, a prominent discourse building this feeling of being stuck is how many contend that living in Dzaleka, “others” are in control of their futures.

“I am living through the hands of others; I can’t plan for five years” (Amanda, 22, Burundian)

It is interesting to briefly note that for some, as perhaps for many contexts worldwide, this has a religious dimension, many young people remarking, “all is in God’s hands”. We heard Marc saying he would thank God the day he wakes up and leaves and that only God could know where he will be in five years. Asking Nestor whether young people in Dzaleka are planning for their futures, he replies, “Most are just thinking of tomorrow, how to get money and how to spend it. Life is in God’s hands; they cannot control it”. He adds that, in five years only with God’s help can he, “be someone else, someone helpful to a community”. Although several young people attend churches in the camp, and at times upload religious posts on their
Whatsapp stories, this is not a topic raised often by these individuals and is therefore not afforded much space in the thesis. Whilst studies have highlighted the important roles played by faith-based organisations in setting of encampment (Ager et al., 2015; Parsitau, 2011; UNHCR, 2014), as noted, frequent comments by young people portrayed religious CBOs in Dzaleka as “businesses” making money, “helping only their own”.

Perhaps more specific to this context is the perception shared by many that the UNHCR has taken over responsibility for their futures and although God may be shaping the bigger picture, the UNHCR is holding the keys.52 Echoing remarks offered by young people in Grayson’s (2017, p.183) study of Kakuma, Marc explains, “the UNHCR is the only one that can make that decision”, whilst Elizabeth says in five years’ time she wants to be capable of being responsible for her children, asked what she is doing now to achieve this she replied, “booking appointments with the UNHCR”. Asking Cathy her thoughts of the UNHCR she suggests, “I cannot say, that is for them to say about me, they know how long I have been here. They need to decide. A refugee cannot decide where she goes”. Moreover, Abshir, reminding us many are still waiting for status, explains, the lengthy RSD process means, “it takes years to know your future, you can have ideas, but you cannot know what will happen”.

Born into displacement, 24-year-old Benoit lived in Mtabila camp in Tanzania until he was 16. Following the death of his parents and after returning to Burundi to find he was not welcome – now a “UN person” – he arrived in Dzaleka alone four years ago. Now married with a young child, and making an income by cutting hair at his friend’s salon, in the previous chapter we heard his thoughts of Dzaleka he shared with Nelson and I:

“When I arrived, I received 12kg [of maize], now I am getting 6kg or less and sometimes they can miss things like oil. People die here and you do not know why. The important thing is to be accepting of the situation. Of course you can impact your life situation, but if you know you are being controlled it is hard to interfere and ask why. You have to accept what comes. We know why we run, I just thank God I am alive”

Whilst offering an interesting portrayal of how Benoit and no doubt many others understand their capacity to act in light of a structure that is overwhelmingly one of constraint, this is an excerpt which poignantly reveals the notion that others are in control of your life in Dzaleka. Moreover, interestingly, we see here a somewhat partial acceptance of this predicament to which we return shortly.

Such a view is perhaps neither surprising nor unique to young people. Responding to how

52 Despite many being aware that receiving countries have the final say on resettlement, the UNHCR, physically located in the camp and seen to organise this process, are often attributed responsibility for this.
long he thinks he will be in the camp and interestingly showing the dual role of God and the UNHCR in having power over this, 63-year-old Mike explains, “God knows. The process is slow, you can’t know, the decision is with the UNHCR”. Although these feelings may transcend generational stages, as we will see, adopting such thoughts has particular consequences for young people, whose feelings of stuckness mean they cannot shift generational stages, and thus, move forwards with their lives. For some participants, as Raoul concludes, paraphrasing Nestor, “All is in the hands of the UNHCR” and as such, many believe all they can do is wait.

A second aspect of this stuckness, grounded in young people’s thoughts of not being in control of their futures, is how many suggest they are unable to become “someone” whilst living in Dzaleka. That young people share this aspiration of “being someone” or “somebody else” was noted in the constraints chapter as a finding nuanced for this generational stage. Didi for example stated, “I dream to be somebody else in the future, I shouldn’t stay in same position, I need to move forward”. Whilst Fabrice shared, “I want to be called somebody else, today I am Fabrice, maybe in the future I will be Director Fabrice, Professor Fabrice”. Clearly, “someone”, can have a multitude of meanings, but perhaps more so, not only in this context, exile described as “a search for a sense of self and belonging” (Boer, 2015, p.500), but at this stage of youth:

“A time of growth, of searching for meanings and belonging; a stage of molding characters, interests, and goals; a process of constructing and reconfiguring identities; a creative period with both risks and possibilities” (Honwana, 2012, p.11).

It is not within this study’s scope to do full justice to this complex ‘assemblage of self’ many young people are navigating and (re)constructing in Dzaleka. Instead, here we focus on two key components that figure frequently in their stories. After briefly addressing the intimate relationship between becoming someone and transitioning into social adulthood, the discussion explores in greater detail how young people’s refugee identity, the “label” or “box” they describe, impacts their perception of self and thus, capacity to become “somebody else”.

In this thesis so far – through the analytical frame of ‘waithood’ – young people as unable to move forwards with their lives has focussed on their own perceived inability to achieve their aspirations, take on new roles and responsibilities associated with social adulthood and transition to the next generational stage. For example, this was demonstrated through Abshir’s story where he explains that not able to learn “useful” skills or find work, he was not in the position to marry and start a family. Unable to achieve what he and many others describe as the “settledness” of adulthood, he portrayed the camp as inhibiting his efforts to make the transition. Moreover, young people’s aspirations of starting a family, something they align with
the start of adulthood, were also explored. Revealing how, given their inability to provide for children, many do not currently wish to take this step. Whilst others, mostly young men, spoke of not being able to gather the different capital needed to initiate this process.

In this light, becoming someone has come to be seen as synonymous with making this generational shift. Loic suggests, “Well obviously, someone is already someone. But I mean to be someone is to have power to lead, to be responsible in the community”. A remark that, in pointing to “responsibility” – a key characteristic of adulthood as defined by young people – builds this premise. However, exploring this first portrayal of waiting, although clearly connected to being unable to make the inter-generational transition, it appears young people’s belief in their inability to be someone is at the same time closely associated with their perception of what it means to be a refugee and importantly, how they perceive those living beyond Dzaleka see them as refugees.

“When being a refugee is difficult, you feel limited. We can do online courses, but I do not feel free at all. I feel I belong to one person, to the UNHCR” (Laura, 23, DRC).

Firstly, for many young people, it is the meaning(s) they attribute to ‘being a refugee’ which imparts this belief that they are not able to become someone – a “person” like others – whilst in Dzaleka. These young people hold the perception or what William in the next chapters calls, “this mindset”, that to be a refugee – despite now knowing how the “real world” works – means to be restricted in all spheres of life, to be stuck within a refugee “box” as Arthur described it, a term invoking confinement and restriction. Supporting Cathy who earlier noted, “a refugee cannot decide where she goes”, Josef explains, “A refugee can’t walk or work. You are not allowed to stay around Malawi. Your place as a refugee is here, we are limited to the camp”. A restrictive view that extends to one’s thoughts for the future. In five years’, Francine states, “If there is the opportunity, I do not want to be called a refugee. Staying here, with this title, you are limited, you cannot do many things, you cannot achieve what you want” and Fabien replies, “We are refugees, we are not planning about our life”.

Acknowledging that to be a refugee means to be restricted, for some, notions of dependency and objectification follow. Fabrice for example shares, “I am living on the purpose of others, depending on someone’s opinions, when people want me to eat is when I eat, when they don’t want me to I don’t”. Olivier states, “Here, I am just a consumer, I am not helping the country’s development” and Raoul, referring to being used to justify NGO existence, contends, “being a refugee, you are business material”. Whilst Fabrice concludes the “good life” is beyond refugees, “We always say good life, but we don’t mean the same, for me, to live like everyone else, I can’t say I have a good life because I am a refugee”.
What is crucial here, and something brought to light through this final comment, is how young people’s perceptions of themselves as refugees are built through their comparison of self with those outside the camp and their strong desire to be like them, like “everyone else”. We see this where Marc compares the camp with the “West”, a life “without stress”, but is a point articulately made by 24-year-old Josef from DRC, who arrived in Dzaleka three years ago, when describing what it means to be a young person in Dzaleka:

“He is a person who needs to be like everyone, but he fails to be that person. He is influenced by seeing those around and feels bad inside but can’t do anything. I’m speaking about young people from Lilongwe, abroad, when we look at them or on TV, we see their behaviour, ways they are living, but we look at our lives and can’t do it, because we are stuck. When we go to Lilongwe and see other young people driving, we think this is amazing. It is simple, but for us, it is like, a young person can drive this is great, we would love to do that, but we can’t. We want to be like other people, but we fail because the limitations we have and the status we have”

In this passage, we see an urge to be someone, like “everyone”, like those living outside the camp, but ultimately, due to “the status we have” – being “stuck” and restricted to the camp – this is not possible. Josef compares young people in Dzaleka to those outside, to Malawians who can drive and thus, move freely, but also to young people on TV, social media or Netflix, as others highlight. All building an idea of camps as places of contradictions, especially for young people (Grayson, 2017), new technologies connecting them to the outside world, to the ‘good’ life, to what it potentially means to be someone, whilst all the time making them, “acutely aware of the disparities and inequalities that exist between Africa and developed countries” (Honwana, 2012, p.90). Something perhaps confirmed when young people speak with friends and family who have been resettled, reinforcing this feeling of being “left behind” (Jeffrey, 2008) and thus, not moving forwards with their lives.

Whilst these comments perhaps allude more to a context of poverty than one specifically of displacement, the meaning these young people give to “being a refugee” clearly inhibits their capacity to be the person they want to be. Yet, looking at how young people compare themselves with others it is interesting to also explore how they believe these others perceive and interact with them. Alluding to Honwana’s notion of youth as a time of searching for “belonging”, we find that young people portray such interactions as instilling in them a sense of exclusion, limiting their ability to develop a belonging to place; the assertion made that belonging and becoming are intimately connected for these young people. It has been noted in contexts of encampment where one is confronted by considerable constraints, opportunities for developing belonging, of feeling included in a wider society, are limited, resulting in
marginalisation and exclusion (Hovil, 2016). Yet, as Hovil (2016) goes on to suggest, belonging can take on multiple forms and expressions and some of these are explored here.

Clearly, contributing to the reasons many fled in the first place was other people making them feel they did not belong. Something that for some, as highlighted, connected to their ethnicity, has carried over into their experience of encampment. Benoit suggests, “When you arrive here the first thing someone notices is your tribe, people tried to show me I am not belonging to them here. So I tried to know places where I can go and pass”. Whilst Henry, discussing his mixed Hutu-Tutsi ethnicity and its implications in Dzaleka, shares:

“The Hutu considers me a Tutsi, so they don’t want me to belong to their society or community, that is why they want to eliminate me, they want to get rid of me because they think Tutsi, also killed Hutus, this is the reason why they still follow us”

Although more data is needed to support such a claim, it appears that lacking refugee status also contributes to this exclusion. Andrew states he does not feel accepted as a result. However, more evident is the exclusion from Malawi, as ‘refugees’, to which many young people allude. Whilst this is built through their own perception of what it means to be a refugee, “we belong to the UNHCR” – thus unable to develop one’s own sense of belonging – this is most clear through young people’s mention of their interactions with those outside the camp. It should be highlighted that many young people speak positively of Malawi and Malawians, referring to the peaceful nature of the country and the friendly spirit of its people. Hermand for example shares, “It is my first home now, it is everything. I feel Malawian. I don’t know the future, but if I leave, I will come back one day”. However, at the same time, further views are visible; views which incidentally should be considered with Malawi’s political situation during fieldwork in mind – a time of perceived growth in hostility to foreigners and those living in Dzaleka – and young people’s ultimate goal of leaving Malawi.53

Tensions between Malawians and those living in Dzaleka can partly be ascertained by listening to camp “rumours”. For example, on our walk, Marc spoke of Malawian men in the Blantyre area, “getting refugees, beating them and taking everything they have”, and others spoke of men who come from nearby villages, attacking people and setting houses on fire. With reference the latter, Rita suggests if she were to be given one of the new plots being prepared to ease Dzaleka’s congestion, she would sell it and buy a safer one closer to the centre of the camp. Yet several speak of a broader tension that exists. Laura explains:

53 A situation worsened in the middle of 2021 when the government announced all refugees living outside Dzaleka, those with businesses in Malawi’s towns, must return to the camp. See: https://www.bbc.com/news/world-africa-57007744
“Outsiders don’t see us as normal, when men see us girls, they think these are not normal girls, they think we don’t have skills. Being a refugee means you have a bad status to others. But some are learning here, outsiders do not see this, do not see us as we are”

In the previous chapter, Arthur spoke of how, outside Dzaleka, “We are called MaBurundi”, told he should not have left the camp. A story echoed by Sarah who reveals, “teachers tease you, children tease you, they call you MaBurundi. Elder people tell you to be strong, but it is difficult to stay strong when you are a child. There was no peace”. Now attending a Malawian secondary school but hiding his true nationality, Prince describes Malawi as, “A peaceful country, but when it comes to development, they don’t want strangers above them, Malawians are selfish”. A point Cathy supports:

“Refugees are not liked by Malawians. They say we destroy, we put a negative impact on the development of the country. If you have a problem with a Malawian, if they have stolen money from you, you go to the police, but they will not give you support”

In the final part of this excerpt, through her reference to the police, Cathy guides us to what many perceive as a more ‘institutional’ level of discrimination. We heard Arthur’s thoughts on how he felt being asked to pay the foreigner’s fee when applying to Diang university, despite explaining he had lived in Malawi almost all his life, “He who is called a refugee, is always discriminated”. Moreover, during our walking interview, Henry, now 23 and having lived the past 17 years in Malawi, as we walked around the camp, was telling me his experience of applying for a driving licence and how, going to the centre to do his test, the official said, “You’re not Malawian, show me your passport”:

“I felt discriminated against. I am realising what it means to be a refugee, it is a challenge. When he asked me where I was from, I felt bad. I am reflecting and I understand I am stateless, I have no country, I was not born in Burundi, I have only seen pictures on the internet, I don’t know what it looks like, I don’t belong anywhere. I have been running with my parents. This is why I don’t want to be a refugee in the future, I don’t want people to call me a refugee, I have seen how people are treated as refugees, I need to be a person like others, not being given a title of refugee”

Whilst these were perhaps cases of officials doing their jobs, nonetheless, such experiences were given meaning to as discrimination by Arthur and Henry and in this remark from the latter, we are perhaps guided to a surmise shared by many. What we see in this passage, like those preceding it, is a young person’s perception of a tension that exists between those in Dzaleka and Malawians. A tension existing in several contexts where citizens and non-citizens are in close daily contact (Gibney, 2006; Glenn, 2000). Aligning his feelings with what it means to be
a refugee, Henry explains his experience of discrimination, called a foreigner in the country he has lived the majority of his life. Yet, what he goes on to articulate is the sense of exclusion this imparted in him, or perhaps reminded him of, not only from Malawi but from his country of origin, “I don’t belong anywhere”. His final sentence implying it will only be possible to belong when he is a “person like others”, without the “title of refugee”, speaking to the relationship between ‘belonging’ and ‘becoming’.

As Brun (2001) notes, “displacement is experienced as being physically present at one place, but at the same time having a feeling of belonging somewhere else” and this is clear for the young people heard from in this chapter. Whilst it appears that becoming “someone” for young people is intimately linked to transitioning into adulthood, taking on the roles and responsibilities associated with that generational stage, what this discussion has also shown is the role attributed to what it means to be a refugee. Stemming not only from their own perception of this “label”, to be stuck and limited, unable to be a “person” like others, but connected also to how young people think others perceive those living in the camp, not as “normal” or “as we are”, but met with various levels of discrimination. All resulting in a sense of exclusion and inability to belong, despite some having lived in Malawi nearly all their lives.

**Patience: “I need to wait”**

In this chapter so far, we have seen how this bridge – this first portrayal of waiting – is given meaning to by many through the notion of “stuckness”. Grounded in a narrative of constraint, these young people suggest they cannot move forwards with their lives because, on one hand they are not in control of their futures, and on the other they cannot become someone whilst living in Dzaleka. Consequently, for whom ‘dis-placed’ correlates to being ‘out of place’, unable to belong or become and therefore not able to move forwards with their lives, one could suggest, ‘time’ for these young people is experienced as ‘wasted’ (Gasparini, 1995), ‘surplus’ (Jeffrey, 2008) or ‘suspended’ (Gray, 2011). Nonetheless, it appears that waiting for these individuals also means acknowledging their dependence in relation to others and accepting this “intrusion of a foreign time” (Pucelle, 1955; as cited in Gasparini, 1995, p.35). In this second section, we find it is also given meaning to through the notion of ‘patience’; these young people acknowledge that they cannot move forwards with their lives whilst in Dzaleka, and they contend they must accept the situation, be patient and wait for resettlement.\(^\text{54}\)

\(^{54}\) Turnbull (2015) also finding young people ‘stuck’ in asylum detention accepting the ‘uncertainty’ of their situation and waiting purposeful through patience.
“Most do not feel good here. But resettlement gives a fresh start, you can be whoever you want. Back in Rwanda I have no possessions, even if I get citizenship here, I will still be ‘MaBurundi’. Resettlement is an opportunity to start over” (Paul, 23, Rwandan)

The first point to make is how these young people contend it is only through resettlement they will finally be able to move forward with their lives. Clearly, as has been alluded to, and aligning with other studies of young people in camps (Auerbach, 2010; Grayson, 2017; Horst, 2006a), third-country resettlement is seen by many in Dzaleka, young and old, as the “holy grail” (Chanoff, 2002). The few elder people who participated in this research explain it would be a chance for peace and an opportunity for their children to move forwards with education. Young people describe it as a chance for “another life”, the “good life”, a “fresh start”, a chance to feel “connected” to the world again; the latter alluding to a sense of belonging discussed previously. In his story, Marc says how resettlement enables a better life, one without stress, he lacks everything in Dzaleka, but when he is resettled he will be able to start a “useful” job, enabling him to marry and start a family. Whilst 19-year-old Elizabeth from Burundi shares how in five years’ time she wants to, “be someone else, live a new life, a different life, to have children and be responsible for my family”, but that it is only through resettlement she can achieve these goals.

Situating physical mobility as a way of moving forwards with their lives, this finding aligns with other studies that explore young people using onwards migration to navigate waithood (Bellino, 2018; Grabska, 2020; Monsutti, 2007; Punch, 2002; Vigh, 2009). Monsutti (2007) describing it as a “rite of passage” into adulthood. Settings of encampment differentiated from these case studies by the nature of the migration they enable, involving bulia, moving to “where the white man lives”. As noted, the chances of being chosen for this in Dzaleka, and many camps worldwide are very slim, nearly one and a half million people with resettlement needs in 2021 and only 12,000 departures by June that year (UNHCR, 2021a). Nonetheless, facing considerable daily challenges, and with resettlement highly visible in camps (Jansen, 2008) – constantly reminded of the “good life” through visitors to Dzaleka, friends and family already abroad, social media and series on Netflix – means that this chance, no matter how small, is something occupying the minds of many and something to wait for.55

However, it is clear, and as the following chapter shows, other young people have realised this opportunity for the “double-edged” sword (Brun, 2015) it is, now seeking other pathways to navigate waithood. To flesh out who, or for which young people, resettlement manifests itself in either way, and in doing so, lay the foundations for the following chapter, it is interesting

55 Bulia in Dzaleka aligning with Horst’s (2006a) analysis of the word ‘buulis’ for Somalians in Dadaab. Each alluding to comparing one’s life with those of others as a result of growing flows of information and remittances, and the hope, longing and dreams people harbour for being resettled.
to briefly explore here the temporality of this aspiration for resettlement, of when Dzaleka as a “bridge” to the good life may have formed in young people’s minds. To do so, it is useful to examine the reasons young people came to Dzaleka in the first place.

Clearly motivations for fleeing are both complex and multifaceted and this study lacks sufficient longitudinal data which could develop a more concise analysis and discussion. Yet, regarding the young people who participated, it is important to firstly note how several have lived in Dzaleka for many years, some Rwandans born there, whilst others, mostly Rwandan or Burundian, fleeing to Malawi with their parents when they were very young. As such, although Dzaleka has become “home” for many, their perception of the camp as a place from which they are waiting to leave has developed over their time growing up there. Many of these young people having time to learn the “harsh realities” of resettlement over their years there.

However, for those arriving more recently, something one boy defines as less than eight years ago, corresponding mainly to those from DRC or Burundi, we see how Dzaleka as a bridge to the good life may have formed some time before their arrival. As we heard in an earlier chapter, on one hand it appears some knew little of Malawi and even less of Dzaleka before fleeing. Several remark they had simply heard Malawi was peaceful and far enough from their “troubles”, a few just following others heading there. Christine explains she and her family arrived five years ago from DRC after, “doing some research on the internet and seeing Malawi was peaceful”. Whilst Lucy states she and her family, living in southern DRC, believed their “issues would continue” in Zambia, whereas Malawi would mean they could be “far enough from these people”. Yet, others had heard about Dzaleka from friends or family already there and beyond its peaceful nature, this was perhaps not all they were told. Speaking with 25-year-old Francis from Rwanda who arrived 10 years ago with his mother and elder brother, we hear an interesting portrayal of more recent arrivals. Discussing the camp’s ever-growing population over the past years he remarks, “You know, most refugees don’t flee because of reasons, they just come because their friends call saying here are opportunities, I have witnessed this”. Asking him to elaborate through Whatsapp after fieldwork, he explains that although there are educational opportunities in Dzaleka which many cannot access back home, he was mainly referring to resettlement.

Whilst perhaps a damaging, over-simplification of a more complex and dynamic situation, we do find some support for Francis’s comment. For example, like Marc, 19-year-old Elisabeth from Burundi explains she came alone to Dzaleka a year ago after hearing “people are helped there”, thinking she too could be “chosen”. Moreover, asked how much longer she thought

56 Stemming in part from not wanting to cause undue and unnecessary harm to participants by asking them to retell potentially traumatic experiences.
she would be in Dzaleka, 18-year-old Rita from Rwanda replies, “I need to wait longer for what I came here for”, adding that if resettlement ceases, “I will go home”. With a view to the Great Lakes region, Bakewell and Bonfiglio (2013) contend one must go beyond conflict as the main driver of migration. They argue that whilst this over-arching context cannot be ignored, neither can the, “on-going, perhaps mundane social processes that drive mobility, such as the search for education, a spouse or a better life in the city” (Bakewell & Bonfiglio, 2013, p.4). Much of this thesis explores the inter-connected ‘social processes’ at play which influence young people’s thoughts of the past, present and future, and as these comments suggest, the opportunity for resettlement, this chance for a “fresh start”, is clearly a pull factor to Dzaleka; 23-year-old Nestor from Burundi even trafficked there seven years ago on its promise.

More research is required to develop a fuller picture of people’s multi-faceted reasons for arriving in Dzaleka. Whilst it appears that resettlement might have drawn a few to the camp, it remains that some knew little of Malawi beforehand and several only learnt of the “opportunities” on arrival. Hermand for example, 25 years old and arriving from DRC two years ago, shares that for two weeks he tried to return home, after finding, like others, only shock and disappointment. It was only later that he heard of resettlement and decided to stay. Nonetheless, clearly important for those in camps, and an opportunity that differentiates this context of waiting and waithood to others, for many young people, especially those arriving more recently, resettlement is seen as crucial for enabling them to take on roles and responsibilities they associate with social adulthood. As such, and as one boy suggests, many are, “just counting the days”, a comment drawing attention to the unwavering belief many possess in one day being chosen for resettlement. Whilst the third section attempts to reveal that “counting the days” is neither passive nor void of action as it may imply, before that, it is important to elaborate further upon young people’s ‘acceptance’ of this waiting.

The ‘need to wait’ is something we can see throughout Marc’s narrative. On arrival he knew he could not go back so decided to “stay and wait for help”, after receiving status he understood he could not leave as soon he would be resettled, and still after eight years waiting, he is aware that although the UNHCR cannot help everyone at the same time, his time will come, he needs only wait a bit longer. Visible is Marc’s confidence that one day he will be resettled, in a context where resettlement only materialises for a small minority. This is something that can be seen in the stories of several other young people who share this first portrayal of waiting, but a point which unfolds interesting in the following two dialogues with Rita and Christine; both of whom having arrived relatively recently.

We have already been introduced to Rita’s story. From Rwanda and 18 years old, just completing her third year in Dzaleka, living alone, and making money though sex work, in this
excerpt she reveals how she came to Dzaleka for resettlement, thinking it would happen quickly, but now knows she must be “patient” and “wait longer”:

What were your thoughts of Dzaleka when you arrived?

“Disappointed, I thought maybe it would be better to go home. The physical presentation was very different to my country. The houses. It was a new environment; the people were very different”

How long did you think you would be here?

“I knew I needed to go somewhere else soon and leave”

Now what are your thoughts of the camp?

“I see I need to be patient, what I came here for, I need to wait for”

What did you come here for?

“Resettlement”

Now how much longer do you think you will be here?

“Don’t know. Three years are not enough, I need more years”

Why?

“I look at other people who have been here 10 years and are still not resettled, I need to wait longer”

As for many, on arrival, Rita alludes to the “other side of life” she found, wanting to leave Dzaleka quickly. Yet, perhaps pointing to what was discussed earlier on the normalisation of camp life, she explains that now she understands the need for patience and to wait longer for what she came for, comparing herself with others to build this point. Sentiments echoed by 27-year-old Christine from DRC who has lived in Dzaleka with her parents and siblings for five years:

When you arrived in Dzaleka what were your first thoughts?

“I was surprised. Surprised about the sleeping and living situation, the way you go to Mapokezi, the houses were different. I was in a new world, different to before”

How long did you think you would be here?
"I heard rumours, I thought I would not be here long, but they were lies I realised. You need to be patient and wait"

Wait for what?

“For resettlement, I knew I would be resettled but I wasn’t sure when”

Now what are your thoughts?

“Everything is normal now, I understand it and know I need to sit, I know I need to be patient and wait for any decision, going home, resettlement or even staying in Malawi”

Which would you prefer?

“Resettlement. I can’t go back, I have nowhere to go”

Other than being resettled, what do you hope to do in the future?

“Agricultural engineer is my dream. When, I don’t know”

What are you doing now to achieve this?

“Now I can’t do anything, I need to wait to know where I will go”

You can’t achieve this in the camp?

“It would be difficult, there is education, but it is difficult to get accepted, applications for students are 20 spaces but over 300 applicants”

Also shocked on arrival, Christine, like Rita, did not think she would have to wait long for resettlement. However, getting used to camp life, she explains that what she must do now is be patient and wait for a decision, to know where she will go, as it is only through resettlement that she can follow her dream of being an agricultural engineer. Yet, what differentiates her experience of waiting from that of Rita’s is her ability to “sit” and wait, perhaps stemming from the support her family can provide. Nonetheless, what is clear in these dialogues is the strong belief, shared by Marc and many others, that they will be resettled one day, but for now they still need to wait “more years” until the day when their names are posted on the UNHCR notice board. Moreover, importantly – as was alluded to in the previous section – perhaps what is also revealed is their somewhat acceptance of this need to wait, or what Pucelle (1955; as cited in Gasparini, 1995, p.35) describes as an acknowledgement of their dependence in relation to others and accepting this “intrusion of a foreign time”; a time, in this context, controlled by both the UNHCR and receiving countries who must process their applications.
Young people’s acknowledgement and perhaps acceptance of their forced dependence on the UNHCR and the (slow) ‘humanitarian’ time they induce has been suggested throughout this chapter. Seen for example where Laura says she “belongs” to the UNHCR, but more clearly when Benoit explains, “The important thing is to be accepting of the situation […] if you know you are being controlled it is hard to interfere”. It is a point also made by 24-year-old Andrew who remarks, after arriving two and a half years ago and finding “nothing to do”, he would overthink “negative things” and as a result, “you have to accept the present situation you are in”. Now he must “wait for the final decision of the camp” and intends to do so by working for his good friend who buys or finds old and unwanted electrical equipment to fix and sell on his small stall in the camp. For Rita and Christine, this acknowledgement that their ‘time’ is now managed by others, is implied partly through reference to the normalisation of camp life, but more explicitly through their repeated mention of the need to be “patient”. Something Gasparini (1995, p.42) describes as expressing, “the full acceptance of the other’s time which can’t be reduced to our own projects or designs” and portrayed more recently by Auyero (2012) as an essential characteristic of those who become “Patients of the State”, individuals who “endure” waiting through patience to achieve their goals.

Thus, although these young people may perceive their time in waiting stuck, unable to move forwards and therefore, wasted, we can see there is also an acknowledgement or acceptance of this need to wait, grounded in the almost unwavering belief that they will eventually be chosen for resettlement. With this in mind, it could be suggested that their waiting is therefore also “meaningful” (Gasparini, 1995), beyond stuckness or patience, but in the sense of given meaning to through hope in one day being resettled (paraphrasing Brun, 2015).\(^57\)

Before expanding upon this final point and perhaps shifting from a discourse of waiting to their actual experience of it, it is important to highlight how, for a few, there is a limit to how long they are willing to wait and how long this patience can last.\(^58\) Some suggest that if resettlement does not come soon, they will leave Dzaleka, once again “voting with their feet” (Belloni, 2020, p.342). Something to which Fabien alludes:

When you arrived how long did you think you would be in Dzaleka?

“I hoped it would be a short time, I stayed to see if things would change”

Now what do you think of the camp?

\(^57\) Brun (2015) discussing how internally displaced Georgian adults give meaning to waiting through their hope for returning home.

\(^58\) The ‘temporality of patience’ a key factor differentiating the young people described in this chapter from their peers in the following one; young people there no longer ‘just’ waiting for resettlement.
“It is the same but I have changed. Before I was not a tailor. Being a tailor has helped me to deal with the camp, I feel at home here even if I miss my family”

Now, after five years, what do you think?

“We are refugees, we are not planning our life, but I think I will not be here. I want a family so I need money. If after a year I do not see a clear path, if the UNHCR does not call, I will go. I can’t return to DRC, I will go to South Africa”

Is there peace there?

“No, but there is money. There you can make more money tailoring”

Like Marc, on arrival, Fabien decided to stay in Dzaleka and wait to be called by the UNHCR. But now after years of waiting and needing money to move forwards with his life, he contends that if the decision does not come soon, he will go to South Africa. A country his friends who are there tell him is like Europe, with opportunities for stable employment. Two young people who expressed similar thoughts did eventually leave. We heard how Celestin, unable to earn enough money to build a house and marry his girlfriend left the camp to open a small convenience store in town. Abshir’s story was also explored. With “nothing to do when you are locked up”, like Celestin, he explained how he has been unable to transition into adulthood because of this, initially stating that all he could do is wait for something to happen. Over the course of several lunches we shared at Mama Gasa’s, he spoke of his growing frustration with the RSD process, being “stuck” and unable to “move forward” without status. He began to say he would leave for Mozambique if he did not receive it soon. A few months after fieldwork he messaged through Whatsapp explaining he had moved to Mozambique, later contacting me from South Africa where he was now waiting to receive status through their “quicker” system.

Thus, for some, there is a limit to the feeling of “stuckness” and protracted waiting that has become their lives. However, one must bear in mind that migration is often a costly affair, those who do so must be able to afford this (McKenzie, 2017). It is therefore not an option open for many, despite their rhetoric. Grayson (2017) makes similar findings of young people who face challenges in Kakuma and leave to live elsewhere, but she highlights the costs of moving around within Kenya, paying bribes, and the significant costs and risks involved when travelling further away. She finds that mobility is therefore only a relevant strategy for young people who can acquire the necessary financial and/or social capital (Grayson, 2017, p.185). Abshir’s story perhaps supports this, Somalians considered to be wealthier in Dzaleka, whilst also having the “friends” to stay with in Mozambique on his arrival.

What has developed in this chapter is a view shared by many young people of not being able to move forwards with their lives whilst in Dzaleka. Grounded in a narrative of constraint and
demonstrated through a perceived inability to escape waithood, but also due to the discourses drawn upon when giving meaning to the refugee label and their consequences for making sense of self or interpreting one’s life. It becomes clear that for these young people, perhaps individuals who arrived more recently, Dzaleka is a time of accepting one’s situation and the importance of being patient whilst waiting to leave for the “good life” where one can finally “belong” and “become”. Although some suggest they will only wait so long, practically, only few can afford onwards migration and unable or unwilling to return home, for many, waiting for the UNHCR’s decision is the only choice. This is perhaps what differentiates this context to others. As, once one receives refugee status, no easy task, resettlement is ever-present – seeing friends leaving for bulia – it presents a chance to start again, a new life with no “stress”, where they can finally achieve their aspirations and move forwards with their lives.

**Keeping busy whilst waiting**

Beyond “stuckness” and “patience”, another way these young people portray their waiting is through the idea of “keeping busy”. In this sense, we shift towards a view of waiting in its more experiential form and examine what these young people are doing – how they express their agency – on a daily basis whilst being patient. This emic praxis was introduced in the previous chapter where it was shown young people are not passive to the context of constraint they describe. Instead, through their navigation of these challenges, they are actively learning to struggle and survive. Despite emerging as another strategy of coping, keeping busy was argued to be an umbrella term employed by many young people to include a number of embodied activities. Whilst, grounded in their navigation of constraints, the temporality this praxis implies was also discussed and it was suggested that such a term is therefore a useful frame for understanding how young people enact waithood in Dzaleka and perhaps other contexts of encampment. However, grounding these final chapters, it was noted that keeping busy takes on different meanings depending on how young people perceive waiting. Having gone some way in building this first portrayal of waiting, we can now flesh out one of these meanings by expanding the praxis through the etic analytical lens of ‘getting by’. Building the premise that *these* young people’s expressions of agency in waiting (Brun, 2015) can be better understood through such a lens; they keep busy by getting by.

Within contexts of poverty, challenging literature that overlooked people’s capacity to act within these “adverse circumstances”, Lister (2004, p.124) contends individuals express their agency in a number of ways, two of which are relevant for this study. The one employed in this chapter corresponds to a personal and everyday form of agency, taken for granted, at times

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59 As seen from young people’s stories it would perhaps be an over-simplification to describe Dzaleka solely as a ‘context of poverty’. Nonetheless, there is much overlap.
only noticed in its absence (Lister, 2004, p.130). It pertains to coping strategies or ways to "struggle to survive", Lister describes "getting by" as "an active process of juggling", displaying resourcefulness and resilience (2016, p.148) to manage and augment existing resources to cope (2004, p.133). It has been critiqued for understating constraints (Finn & Oldfield, 2015) or not going far enough in showing people "getting things done" (Thieme, 2018, p.543). However, I suggest it is a productive lens for this context as it enables us to see not only how young people are coping with 'place' – through their expressions of 'thin' agency discussed in the previous chapter – but also how they are coping with 'time', enduring their protracted waiting, this intrusion of foreign time.

Coping with place through peers

The previous chapter demonstrated how many young people, regardless of how they perceive waiting, are getting by in the sense of coping with 'place'. A number of strategies were outlined, including piecework, employment, volunteering, Mapokezi and illicit activities, to demonstrate how young people – with potentially greater equity in the camp – are coping. The importance of social networks was also addressed. Other people living in Dzaleka seen not only to be important sources of learning, but also useful networks of support. Whilst exploring more 'romantic' or 'sexual' relationships, the point was made that although those living with family can rely on familiar networks – seen through Christine’s comment earlier on being able to “sit” and wait – for those living alone, developing relationships with others is crucial for dealing with the camp. Before exploring how many are keeping busy also to cope with 'time', it is interesting to address something missing from these earlier discussions and that is the role of peers.

Perhaps connected to the aforementioned breakdown of inter-generational rapport in settings of encampment, the importance of peers is visible in the stories of many young people in Dzaleka and no doubt many other settings of displacement worldwide (see Gladden, 2012; Sleijpen et al., 2016). Marc explains that despite having his grandmother and younger siblings in Dzaleka, each night he stays with friends, “one night here, another there”. Such friends are often portrayed as a source of opportunity: Augustin was offered a plot of land to cultivate by one of his friends (see photo below), Fabien was taught how to make a three-piece suit by a friend, and many developed their English by practicing with peers. But also, a source of encouragement: Patrick explains how his best friend Arthur motivated him to study, eventually enabling him to pass his end of primary school exams and Henry says if his friend had not convinced him to apply for DAFI he would not have done so otherwise. These last comments allude perhaps to the ‘emotional’ support peers provide.
After sharing his story of growing up in the camp and looking despondent, Henry began to smile when he saw his friend approaching us, remarking, “he is also my family, I am happy when I speak with this big guy”. It appears in young people’s stories that talking with peers is an important way of internalising their present life and a way of distracting them from it. Raoul explains that on arrival he found “despair” and the camp “boring”, but that, “I got some good friends, they helped me, they told me their story”. Innocent explains that in his spare time he spends it with friends, “we talk about life” and in a similar manner Loic says, “We talk about life, life here, how we can forget’. Perhaps also as a way of forgetting, Sarah shares how, having left her family in Lilongwe to live in the camp alone, after seeing young people dancing, she joined them, she explains, “it helps me to reduce stress”. Thalia also suggests that being with peers is important for dealing with the stress of the camp, as, arriving five years ago:

“The environment scared me, I heard stories of fighting and dramas all the time. So I needed to find good friends who I can trust. Now I am used to it, at least I have friends I can talk to. It’s just stressful to stay here, it’s not easy, so it’s good when you have people, you sit down and forget everything, you joke, that helps you a lot, it reduces stress. After studying I come home, meet friends, we talk, we joke, they distract me, and the day ends like that, so I am happy at the end of the day, I am not stressed”
Yet, beyond the more practical and emotional support peers provide, they can also play an economic role. As we left the bar in Blantyre during our walking interview, Marc was explaining how he liked this place as “we meet here and talk as youth, there is no violence”, before one of his friends put his head out the door and shouted, “when you come back you should bring some money”. Sharing or receiving money from friends is something several speak of. Francis remarks how “African culture is sharing, so I end up sharing my money, if my friends are in really big need, I want to help, because there is no one else helping”, whilst a few mention they receive money from friends who have been resettled. As the previous chapter noted, friends are also important for finding piecework, David asked his friend Innocent to build his house, but is a point into which Christine provides interesting insight in the following dialogue. Whilst discussing what it means to be a young person in the camp, she suggests:

“Peer pressure has a big impact. You can be close to a friend who can show you good things like school and church, you can be busy looking for a job, but then there are also bad friends who show you evil issues like stealing and alcohol”

Do elder people also have to deal with this?

“Young people need to be more connected to friends than family because friends can provide activities”

So friends are more important?

“I realised yes. If you look at the family, a parent advises their children, but young people are listening to their peers more. There is a problem in the family, a conflict between the parent and young people”

Can you explain this conflict?

“It comes from poverty. If the family has no money, young people do not focus on their parents, if their friends have something to do, like a job, then young people will focus on them because they could get opportunities. A family could also have something, but if friends are closer then they will listen to them”

Christine firstly highlights the more negative impact peers can have, a point several mention; Marc and Nestor both acknowledge they must keep away from their friends and thus, one another, if they are to live. Yet, in this passage Christine reminds us of the tension existing between these different generations; perhaps accounting for the reason Marc lives with his friends and not his grandmother.
Coping with time

Gasparini (1995, p.35) suggests that once waiting – this intrusion of a foreign time – has been accepted, it is likely to become “equipped” with substitute activities such as reading, working, resting or speaking with friends, “time is filled so as to reduce its costly or unpleasant effects”. In his study with young Indian men, Jeffrey et al (2008) explains this through the praxis of ‘timepass’. Experiencing waithood as “surplus” time, under-employed, disconnected from education and overall, left behind, he contends these young men meet with friends, “just passing time”, lacking more meaningful ways of connecting with the world (Jeffrey, 2010). In Dzaleka, we can see, “keeping busy”, for many, also manifests itself in this sense, as a way of enacting patience, of passing or coping with this protracted, ‘interstitial’ (Gasparini, 1995) time of waiting. The following conversation with 25-year-old Hermand from DRC builds this point. Asking him about his daily routine he replies:

“I wake up, I bath, no breakfast in the camp, I go to work until lunch, then work until three or four. I stay later because it is boring in the camp. When I go back, I meet friends, play pool, watch football, then go to bed. There is no place to go. In bed I read or watch movies, I stay up late chatting, last night was up till 3am. This is my week, on the weekends sometimes I go into town”

You said it was boring, why?

“You see the same people, same places, there are no activities, if there are they’re always similar. Just football, Tumaini two days a year, fashion shows…”

How do you deal with this?

“You need good friends to make you forget you are here; you can share a drink”

Defined as time not passing quickly enough, Brun (2015, p.29) contends, “Boredom becomes a symbol of protracted displacement”, it represents “a feeling of being stuck in a meaningless present, waiting for a future that does not come”. To deal with time not passing quickly enough, Hermand ‘equips’ (Gasparini, 1995) his waiting by spending more time volunteering. Speaking with a Malawian woman who coordinates JRS’s Naweza project, she also suggests that the reason young people volunteer with CBOs and NGOs is because they are “just passing time, they don’t want to stay at home doing nothing, volunteering gives them hope, helps them to pass the days”. A point that reminds us of those in the previous chapter such as William or Josef who suggested they initially enrolled in educational courses to pass the time and distract themselves from the camp. Suggesting NGO participation in camps for young people is in many ways about ‘timepass’ (Wagner, 2017). Yet, Hermand also mentions the role of peers.
Whilst friends enable young people to cope with place, to navigate the challenges of living in the camp, helping them to deal with the stress it entails, it is clear that in doing so, they play an important role in ‘minimising’ (Gasparini, 1995) their perceived time spent waiting. After volunteering, Hermand meets up with friends to play pool and at night he stays up late “chatting”, echoing earlier comments by concluding that these friends enable him to “forget” he is in Dzaleka. Many allude to spending time with friends to pass or “occupy” time. We saw this where Thalia stated, “and the day ends just like that” after spending time with her friends but is also something stressed by Innocent. After explaining how it is important to choose “good” friends to avoid harmful activities, when asked what he does with these friends he replies, “Just keeping busy, watching games, occupying the day, this helps me be aware of bad things, I spend all my time doing this”.

However, Innocent goes on to say they, “Share ideas about what we can do in the future. Thinking of once we are resettled what we will do”. Discussing the future with friends is something others also mention. We heard Marc stating how he and his friends want to “drop this life in the camp” and find, “a better life, we want to change this life” and Loic explains, “We focus on the future, in the camp you can meet people who discuss useless things, so with my friends we try to plan steps for the future, I try to make them think of the future”. Thus, whilst peers can distract young people from their waiting, making time pass more quickly, we see they also assist young people to navigate time by using conversations with one another to orient themselves towards the future in a context which otherwise provides few other temporal markers (Masquelier, 2013). Before moving on, it is interesting to briefly explore one activity that particularly stood out during my time in Dzaleka.

Corsaro (2009, p.301) defines peer culture as “a stable set of activities, routines, artefacts, values and concerns” that young people “produce and share in interaction with peers”. Whilst this is no doubt enacted in the conversations outlined above, when young people discuss their thoughts for the future, this phenomenon stood out most clearly for me each day as I would return to my car and pass a group of boys practicing dancing routines, surrounded by many younger boys who were watching and attempting to copy what they were seeing. Described as time being “wasted” by elder people, time that could be better spent studying, for younger people, dancing, much like playing various sports, is explained as a way to keep busy and distract themselves from the camp. In the same way many contend it is those from DRC who go to watch and play football, young people from DRC were described as those who are mostly involved in dancing, Augustin suggests this is because, “many have trauma so they like music and dancing to disappear that”.

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Yet, for many, dancing appears to be more than just ‘passing time’, but a way to express oneself in a context where young people find it difficult to have their voices heard through other means. Patrick explains how young people dance to “send a message out there”, to “take something out through the heart”. Like many young people worldwide, those in Dzaleka are clearly influenced by popular culture and social media that inspires them to use dancing as a medium of expression, however, the context of the camp provides further incentives for being involved in this practice. On one level, as is the case for Sarah, this stems from the ability to make money by dancing for a CBO, performing either in the camp at events held by NGOs and the UNHCR, or in town for various organisers. However, perhaps an over-arching motivation is the camp’s annual music festival, *Tumaini* (We Hope).

![Figure 30: *Tumaini* music festival in Dzaleka. Researchers photo.](image)

With different events including slam poetry, singing and dance, and with artists coming from different countries in Southern Africa this is an event that figures prominently in the thoughts of many young people. Didi shared earlier how this a day when she can leave her problems behind. Yet, for a few, if successful at auditions, this is a chance to exhibit their skills to the whole camp and an international audience who have travelled to attend. Thus, whilst dancing for many is a distraction, a way of passing the time, it is also a way to express oneself with friends, and something visible on these walks back to the car on the side of the building in front of which these young people practice their dancing each day.
Enacting waithood: Keeping busy by getting by

In this third section, I attempted to reveal how young people experience their waiting through the praxis of keeping busy. Grounded in the previous chapter, it has been shown how many keep busy – express their agency – with a view of ‘getting by’, of coping with both, this ‘place’ of constraint and a surplus of ‘time’. Without repeating that prior chapter, the point was built by listening to the importance young people give to peers; a topic that reveals the intimate rapport between coping with place and time. As Christine suggested, and an earlier chapter demonstrated, affording attention to the multifaceted role of peers is important given a context where inter-generational relationships are often disrupted. Thus, I argue that, whilst all those who participated are enacting, or enduring waithood by keeping busy, looking at this praxis through the etic lens of getting by enables us to not only better understand how and why some ‘keep’ busy whilst waiting, but it also reveals how waithood is nuanced for such individuals in this context.

Building their waithood, young people whose stories were explored in this chapter employ a discourse of waiting as one of stuckness. Not in control of their futures nor able to become, they contend they cannot move forwards with their lives whilst living in Dzaleka. Keeping busy
described as the emic praxis through which these young people enact waithood in this context, enabling them to get by. Such findings, combined with those in the previous chapter, align with more recent waithood studies which portray waithood as a time of, “experimentation, improvisation and great creativity as young Africans adopt a range of survival strategies to cope with the daily challenges in their lives” (Honwana, 2014, p.35). However, where a context of encampment can perhaps see waithood in a new light is through these young people’s acceptance of their waiting and their waithood, this intrusion of a foreign time, and their acknowledgement that they must therefore be patient and wait for resettlement which will assist them to escape this situation.

Honwana contends young people are not, “just sitting and waiting for their elders or the government to do something for them”, but are finding their own solutions through their creativity (2014, p.34). We have seen that young people in Dzaleka are not passively waiting but are actively learning to cope with this challenging context, whilst constantly following up their case with the UNHCR. However, Honwana also suggests young people in waithood are, “not simply making do or getting by” (2012, p.166), many now at the forefront of political change through youth protest movements (Honwana, 2019). Yet, what we can see in Dzaleka – a context shrouded in an ever-present and visible opportunity to cross over into the “good” life and one where age is perhaps a ‘thickener’ – is that many are ‘just’ getting by, employing various strategies to deal with constraints and pass time, until the day their name appears on the UNHCR notice board, something they believe will happen one day. As Marc tells us, since our last interview he has been, “Just in the camp, waiting. […] Just surviving”. Now, to conclude this chapter, and before examining how another group of young people give meaning to waiting, a final section briefly sheds light on a contradiction visible in the stories of many of those discussed so far.

“I am becoming responsible for my life”

We have heard how this first group of young people do not see themselves as able to move forwards with their lives whilst living in Dzaleka. Although the chapter focussed on exploring the meaning given to being a ‘refugee’ as causing this, through the lens of waithood the study has adopted throughout – and although the two are intimately connected – it is evident this is grounded in their thoughts of not being able to transition into social adulthood. However, as noted in the introductory chapter, narrative and discourse form part of a story, something one tells others to make a point concerning how they feel; a way of making sense of a confusing world. Whilst these are rooted in trends of experiences, often they are more coherent than the totality of experience. Young people’s portrayal of waiting in this chapter is important and useful because it highlights the multifaceted nature of waiting for young people in settings of
encampment. Nonetheless, I argue, through their enactment of waithood – by getting by to keep busy – these young people are simultaneously developing certain traits which in their own words characterise adulthood. Thus, young people’s navigation of challenges in Dzaleka enables them to ‘partially’ transition to a social adulthood which they are defining, despite what their narrative may suggest; a finding made visible by employing a lens of waithood.

In her study of young Eritrean girls and women who migrate to Khartoum in search of transitioning on to a “better” life, Grabska (2020) suggests the utility of waithood lies in its multifaceted approach to the inter-generational transition from youth to adulthood, “which goes beyond securing a job and extends to social life and civic participation”. In Dzaleka, we have seen how the markers of such generational stages are both complex and multiple (Horowitz & Bromnick, 2007), but also constantly remade in relation to the other (Durham, 2000). For example, an earlier chapter detailed how several young people, despite being married and/or having children, still did not identify as adults. They see themselves as lacking the capacity to be responsible for their families, forced to rely on others, including the UNHCR for food distribution or as beneficiaries of NGOs. I contend, exploring ‘responsibility’ and ‘independence’ as markers of social adulthood, to which many frequently refer, is a fruitful way of fleshing out the contradiction at hand.

We have heard young people explain how they cannot move forwards with their lives due to, amongst other reasons, the idea that they are not in control of their futures. Through comments such as, “I belong to the UNHCR” and everything “is in their hands”, or the hands of God, young people implied they are forced to be dependent or as Auerbach (2010) suggests, have given up responsibility for their lives. Whilst ‘giving up’ should be problematised for the passivity it implies and its understatement of constraints, these comments, combined with those elsewhere, do indicate young people’s view of not being able to develop traits of responsibility and independence. Yet, at the same time, by looking at how these young people are getting by it would suggest they are developing these characteristics of social adulthood. Whilst this finding speaks to all the young people who participated in the study, all needing to confront the challenges they face in the camp, it is in the stories of those explored in this chapter that the contradiction stands out. Moreover, we see it is particularly pronounced for those who are living in the camp alone and thus, forced to be independent from their families and become responsible for themselves and others in their care.

“As I told you last time, I am an orphan, I grew up with different people. I realised there are two types of people in the world, good and bad I know that now. I have learnt to take care of myself, I can be responsible. Now I am used to this life, I can live here” (Ada, 26, Burundi)
In her response to the camp’s impact these 17 years, Ada, now living with her younger sister and both their children, reinforces the line of thought in the previous chapter, she explains how she has learnt about the people she lives with and how to live with this diverse group. She alludes towards her ability to navigate this environment, she states she can be responsible; coping and responsibility going hand in hand. Ada had been supporting her family through a cleaning job at an NGO compound. However, forced to leave when the person for whom she was covering returned from maternity leave, she began making rugs from tailor’s offcuts which she sold to camp visitors. Her responsibility expressed for all those with whom she lives.

Others allude to their growing independence despite others being in control of their futures. Jemma for example, Congolese and 21-years-old, explains that during her two years living alone in Dzaleka, “Being in the camp has opened my mind, I realised I need to be doing my own thing in the short run because I cannot expect help from anyone”. Although Jemma states that in the short term she must cope by herself, she implies, like many others, that in the long term she is dependent on the UNHCR for resettlement. Yet, having moved to the camp by herself, built up enough funds to open and stock a small convenience shop, her story would imply that this ability to cope by herself and thus, be independent, has been somewhat realised. A similar line of thought is expressed by 18-year-old, Burundian, Marie who has lived in Dzaleka with her elder sister’s family for two and a half years. She explains:

“When I see the situation back home, you grew up well, provided all because you are with your family. But here the camp has taught me to not depend on other people, to think for myself, to find my own means to support myself in case no one else can”

Like Jemma, and reminding us of the previous chapter, Marie speaks of Dzaleka as if it were a teacher, indicating that, now lacking parents to provide for her, the camp has taught her to be independent and find her own solutions. However, later sharing she had unsuccessfully been to Card to ask for a job, demonstrates the complexity of this concept, where attempts at becoming financially independent can indirectly involve maintaining dependence on NGOs. Furthermore, in this excerpt, Marie brings to our attention a factor differentiating young people’s capacity to develop these characteristics. Whilst back home one may be provided with all as they are with family, arriving in the camp without this support network, one can no longer be sure of the help it can enable. Although the disrupted nature of inter-generational relationships was discussed, many young people\textsuperscript{60} are without immediate or extended family in Dzaleka and although peers can play an important role in replacing these, such individuals infer they must become responsible and independent to cope or survive.

\textsuperscript{60} 16 participants are ‘F1’, three marrying recently or having children moving them from this category.
In our second interview Rita went on to say, “I have changed my way of thinking, before I depended on my parents. Now I depend on myself, I know how to live by myself”. Whilst, Fabien, who arrived in the camp from DRC five years ago at the age of 18 states, “Before I depended on my parents, but here I live by self, I do things that before I thought were things my parents should do. I know how to take care of myself” and Raoul, aged 25, also from Congo but in the camp for three years, shares:

“The camp changed me, from child to man enough. Before I was supported, I was not grown up, all was easy, now I support myself, I can make moral decisions, I fight to support myself. I want to buy a car and now is the first time I feel I may be able to do. If I have a meeting in town, I can’t be taking public transport I will arrive too late”

At the same time alluding to his relatively better off position in the camp, working as a prominent master of ceremony (MC) both in Dzaleka and in town, this passage reveals, in a similar manner to these other young people, that since arriving in the camp Raoul has moved forwards along the transition to adulthood. Thus, despite highlighting their inability to move forwards with their lives and their forced humanitarian dependence for daily needs and accessing aspirations, we see how these same young people also allude to their growing independence and capacities to be responsible for themselves and others. To make sense of this seemingly contradiction, it is useful to highlight the relational nature of these concepts.

Being responsible for oneself, one’s actions and potentially for others, whilst at the same time being independent, able to take certain decisions, uninfluenced or controlled by others are two common, interconnected markers of social adulthood (Arnett, 1998, 2000). As Whiting (1998) critiques of Arnett’s (1998) work, overly-individualistic interpretations of these terms are problematic and one should consider their relative and relational natures (Punch, 2002). In her research of youth transitions in rural Bolivia, Punch (2002) contends that in a majority world setting where siblings must fulfil both personal and household interests throughout their life course, dependence and independence are constantly renegotiated between parent and child. Critiquing the rigid, linear approach to generational transitions, she prefers the term ‘negotiated interdependence’ to describe inter-generational relations.

In Dzaleka, also a majority world setting, many lack opportunities to economically support themselves or their families and must rely on NGOs and the UNHCR to survive. In such a context, it is therefore, highly difficult to become ‘fully’ independent from these organisations. Nonetheless, young people do speak of becoming responsible for their lives and to depend on themselves. Although it is unclear to what extent these traits are developed, it is perhaps useful to borrow from Punch’s analysis and accept the fluid and relational nature of these concepts, approaching them more along a continuum with one being either more or less
responsible and independent. As Burkitt (2016) notes, “We act in multiple webs of interdependence in which no one is ever completely independent or dependent but always on the continuum between these”. In this sense, young people can be understood as in a relation of negotiated (inter)dependence, not with their parents, a relationship found to be somewhat disrupted in this context, but with humanitarian organisations who have perhaps taken over this parental role.61

Thus, despite a discourse of constraint, being stuck with nothing to do and thus, unable to move forwards with their lives, these young people, are nonetheless developing markers of social adulthood beyond work and marriage. We have seen, especially for those without family in Dzaleka, through their experiences of waiting, by learning to cope with challenges, these traits emerged. Such findings align with those of Grabska (2020); contextualising discourse within broader experiences, she argues, stickiness “produces alternative and autonomous pathways of transition” (2020, p.24), the term referring more to “self-perceptions and aspirations rather than their actual experiences” (2020, p.33).62 As for her, here, we heard cases of young people living alone, supporting siblings and children, running businesses, finding their own solutions and in doing so, exemplifying (and mentioning) traits of responsibility and independence. This suggests, despite their underlying narrative of constraint, these young people are perhaps, at the same time, transitioning on their own terms and redefining generational categories (see Tefferi, 2007) in the context of the camp. However, it is important to note, this transition is in many ways ‘partial’ – Raoul saying he is now a man “enough” – and one must not overlook these young people’s dominant perception of being unable to move forwards with their lives whilst in Dzaleka.

Concluding remarks

In this chapter, I attempted to contribute to existing camp studies through analytical lenses of waiting and waithood that have arguably been overlooked in the emerging ‘third way’ body of literature. Now in his eighth year in Dzaleka, in our final interview Marc concludes, “I am tired of this life. I wish to go abroad”. Whilst ‘waiting’ appears to be an underlying experience of encampment and a way of giving meaning to one’s time in Dzaleka, here we have seen how ‘waiting to leave’ takes on a particular form for many young people. For Marc and several others whose stories we heard, with little say over their futures and unable to ‘become’, waiting

61 Such organisations perhaps also relying on ‘beneficiaries’ to ‘justify’ their continued existence, as one boy suggested.
62 For an interesting case study that echoes much of this discussion whilst highlighting the similarities for different sites of encampment, see Rotter’s (2016) analysis of asylum detention in the UK where, on one hand, she fleshes out the passive narrative people employ to describe their waiting as an ‘empty time’ where ‘nothing happens’, but on the other hand she describes the actual daily lives of people who are getting on with daily routines, volunteering, enrolled in education and gaining qualifications.
is at first portrayed as stuckness; unable to move forwards with their lives in the camp. Yet, in many ways accepting this intrusion of a protracted ‘humanitarian’ time, these same young people acknowledge that, because resettlement is the only way they can move forwards with their lives, this waiting is necessary and they must be patient. These young people demonstrate that such waiting is neither passive nor void of challenges and highlight the importance of keeping busy whilst waiting. By examining this emic praxis through an etic lens of ‘getting by’, the chapter reveals how their enactment of waithood in Dzaleka manifests itself in the ways they are coping with both, this place of constraint and surplus of time. All implying a nuanced waithood for these young people who suggest the camp is a place where they can ‘just’ get by and wait for a solution.

This speaks to studies that affirm camps to be places of contradiction and it therefore appears that whilst Dzaleka is clearly seen by many young people as a place preventing them from moving forwards and one entrenching their waithood, at the same time, it is a place that provides a somewhat unique opportunity to escape this stuckness, achieve the “good life”, and something worth waiting for. This perhaps accounts for why so many employ essentialist notions to describe their rapport with place, acknowledging they do not belong or are out of place in the camp, but not equating this to a desire for return, wanting onwards mobility instead; interestingly inferring that they would be able to create this connection to place in the West. Moreover, a further tension is visible in that, despite expressing an inability to achieve more traditional markers of social adulthood, through the ways they have learnt to cope, these young people are developing traits of independence and responsibility and thus, nevertheless, partially transitioning on their own terms. Now, in what remains of the thesis, we consider a different portrayal of waiting employed by other young people, and one that suggests, although grounded in stuckness, waiting in the camp can also be a time for building oneself and taking steps towards moving forwards with your life.

63 In her review of how space and place are conceptualised in refugee studies, Brun (2001) highlights that whilst academia has importantly transitioned beyond essentialised notions towards people and place, one should not overlook the ways displaced people continue to employ such an approach in their own descriptions or strategies to create places and boundaries.
Chapter 5: “Working on this life”

Attempting to shed light on what a youth perspective(s) can reveal about the camp, this thesis has developed several findings by exploring young people’s experiences of Dzaleka and listening to their narratives of giving meaning to their time there. The camp is a place of waiting, a condition differentiated for young people who wait to leave and become, two things intimately connected. Moreover, whilst Dzaleka is clearly a place of constraint for all living there, it is also one of opportunity that provides a pathway for young people to escape waithood through resettlement. However, grounded in their generational stage, the camp is, at the same time, a place of learning in a broader sense of the word, young people develop life skills beyond the classroom through their navigation of people and place. Emerging from such discussions, these final analytical chapters re-examine waiting, revealing how it is nuanced for camps yet not given meaning to in the same way by all. The previous chapter suggested many young people experience waiting as stuckness, unable to move forwards with their lives in Dzaleka, but acknowledge they must be patient and get by until they are chosen for resettlement and thus, can finally become “someone”. Before concluding the thesis, in this chapter we see how for others – fewer in number than those in the previous chapter – waiting, and thus their thoughts of encampment, manifest themselves in an alternative manner.

Although also waiting to leave and acknowledging the challenges they face in Dzaleka, these individuals see resettlement as a “double-edged sword” (paraphrase Brun, 2015), the issues with “not living where you are” and waiting for this to move forwards with their lives. Expanding existing studies of camps, I argue these young people see Dzaleka, this temporary “bridge”, as a nodal point on which they are “taking steps” to “better” themselves and “build” their lives for an unknown destination and duration.64 Contributing to waithood studies, I explore the ways and reasons these young people keep busy through the concept of ‘getting out’ (Lister, 2004), a useful etic lens to reveal how they are taking steps to get out of waithood and enact youth as it should be experienced, a time of becoming. I demonstrate how these individuals are taking such steps through learning in its more narrow or formal sense, before concluding the chapter by expanding the earlier discussion of ‘belonging’ through a brief exploration on the importance of “making sense” or “finding meaning” where you are for these young people.65

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64 All emic notions and a response to Jansen (2016) who asks: “Do these places [camps] show us a future of new patterns of settlement in a broader spectrum of mobility, in which camps are nodal points for the many stemming from enduring and chronic crisis environments and impoverished, under-resourced marginal lands, where people build their lives for unknown durations?” but expanding it by exploring young people’s experiences of such places.

65 To be clear, Chapter 3 discussed a narrative of learning young people express in their stories of Dzaleka. As a response to the impact the camp has had on them, all the young people who participated, to varying degrees, describe Dzaleka as a ‘school’ or ‘teacher’ that has taught them how to cope, speaking to learning in a broader sense, learning life skills and behaviours. However, in this chapter we explore how a particular group of young
William’s Story

To structure this chapter, it is useful to take a closer look at William’s portrayal of his time in Dzaleka. Examining the one walk and talk and two semi-structured interviews conducted with 25-year-old William, it is clear to see how the various narratives explored in this thesis interweave with one another, building different parts of his story. William was in his second year of an undergraduate degree in Economics when he was forced to flee the province of South Kivu in the East of DRC in 2015. Leaving his family behind, with Rwanda not an option due to the political situation between his country and theirs, he entered Burundi with a number of others also fleeing. Finding hostilities occurring in Burundi, the group moved on to Tanzania, but upon realising everyone was police, “asking for papers”, and with some in the group knowing of the peaceful nature of Malawi, having friends and family in Dzaleka, they continued their journey South, avoiding immigration controls on the way.

Four years later and after finding time in his full schedule, volunteering for JWL and enrolled in their diploma, William and I began our walk of the camp, beginning at the JRS and JWL compounds. In Chapter 3, we heard William’s comments on arriving in Dzaleka; being told life is ‘tough’ with no work and that it is a dangerous place to live. To deal with this, he knew he needed to “keep busy”, forget this situation and avoid these dangers. Through education he believed he could do so, he enrolled in a short course in Business Administration in French after two weeks and hasn’t stopped since; completing several other short courses, starting to volunteer for JRS and later JWL, becoming proficient in English through EFL and now close to completion of JWL’s diploma in Social Work, eventually starting their degree at the end of fieldwork. Although education is clearly important for William and something in which he is moving ahead compared to many other young people, he explains that despite this, he still sees himself as behind. He states, if he was still in DRC, he would have been working by now, receiving a good salary, having finished his degree by the age of 22. However, now 24 and completing a diploma, he explains the camp has “pushed me back”.

Whilst the restrictions placed on those in Dzaleka ground William’s view of the camp as a place of constraint – “I can’t fully enjoy my rights as a human, I can’t get employed, I can’t go to places that I want because of the restrictions” – something of particular significance for him is the camp’s over-congestion. As we walked away from JWL’s compound, across the football pitch and into the camp, we passed a long line of people queuing for Mapokezi. Prompting

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66 A situation shared by several of his male Congolese peers who participated in the study.

67 A precursor to being able to volunteer for them.
William to remark on the first time he joined this queue, waiting three days due to the large number of new arrivals all queuing together. Moreover, arriving later at the borehole near his house, he explained how this is also a practice he does not enjoy, as the camps growing population means even arriving at 4am no longer ensures a speedy process. William suggests this situation has specific impacts for young people who, although perhaps not unlike in DRC, must attend overcrowded classrooms and face considerable competition when it comes to securing a place on short courses, higher learning, and the limited volunteering positions, “I witnessed myself, on my desk 100 applications for only 20 places”. Worried that in five years, with the population growing and available services staying the same, this is likely to get worse.

However, beyond the challenges he talks of and the strategy of formal learning he employs to navigate these constraints, it is interesting to see that the meaning William attributes to keeping busy through education has shifted over time. Despite being “education minded”, whilst William may have initially taken an educational pathway as a strategy for keeping busy, in the sense of getting by – to cope with time and place – gradually, this has taken on a further meaning. In our final interview, he explains:

“I didn’t want to stay in this environment without doing anything. I needed an occupation to avoid stress. Now I view things differently, but at first, I just wanted to be busy to not think about home, the life I had before and what life is going to be like in five years. I just needed an occupation and yeh it helped a lot, but now I am viewing life differently”

Highlighting what he was told on arrival, William notes – as was alluded towards in the previous chapter – how many people maintain a “camp perspective” or “mindset”, of “defining themselves by limitations”, meaning the only choice is to wait for resettlement. However, he goes on to say:

“Of course I think about that, but I also think of ways forward, I don’t just focus on the negative side, I have to see how I can better myself. […] Resettlement is not realistic. If you focus on it, it will not happen. I consider the camp as a place where someone can redefine who they want to be, so instead of just considering yourself in need of support from others, you can also view life from that angle where you are independent or even supporting others”

Alluding to his involvement with NGOs, in the form of participating in educational courses and volunteering, he suggests, “The William of 2015 is totally different to the William of today thanks to these opportunities”. With a view to the future, he states, being “exposed” to all of
this has meant he has been able to “take steps” towards one day being able to run several businesses, “wherever I am”. Throughout fieldwork I got to know some of the projects he was working on, activities he describes as “preparing me for my future”. For example, on several occasions I was invited to go and watch the football team he manages, composed of young boys in the camp, something preparing him to “run other community projects”. He would also frequently discuss the CBO he and his good friend had made to help other people in the camp create business plans of their own, providing them with a template to follow and eventually connecting them with people who may be able to support their projects.

Before exploring some of the points William raises, it should be pointed out that many young people do not share William’s ‘privileged’ position in the camp, enrolled in higher learning and volunteering for an NGO. Something perhaps assisted by having a relation in Dzaleka who used to coordinate projects for an NGO, now running his own CBO; information found out later, omitted from his story. Thus, what we have heard here and will hear throughout this chapter should be considered with this in mind. Nonetheless, what William’s story does reveal is a further way waiting in Dzaleka is perceived and one shared by several other young people with different backgrounds, whose thoughts and experiences of the camp build this chapter.

A place of Constraint

Perhaps the first point to make with regards to this second group of young people is to highlight how their portrayal of waiting is also grounded in a narrative of constraint. Demonstrated throughout the thesis and clearly visible in William’s comments above, but what is also visible is their acceptance of this situation, much like those in the previous chapter. Discussing, somewhat vaguely and perhaps symbolically – himself doing relatively well in Dzaleka – the “restrictions”, William goes on to say, “To some extent we cannot control them because they are beyond us, you just see how you can find solutions on your level to the challenges”. Whilst Samantha, Rwandan and one of the only two young people still attending secondary school, alluding to William’s previous comments, explains how she often fails classes due conditions at school and lacking materials, but to deal with this, “I accept the situation and word hard”. Moreover, as Chapter 2 revealed, these young people, unsurprisingly, also share the view that a “good” or “better” life exists beyond the camp, in one’s “future” life. Discussing resettlement, Samantha goes on to say, “there is good life there”, whilst Francis, also Rwandan, suggests, “It is a big chance, my siblings both passed through the same process. If I had it, I would embrace it, but since I don’t have it now, I have to live the life that life gives me”.

Drawing attention to the final part of Francis’s comment, we can begin to flesh out a portrayal of waiting that in many ways differs from the one described in the previous chapter. Whilst
these young people also consider the camp as a temporary place of transit, a “bridge”, and would welcome the opportunity for resettlement, where their portrayal of ‘waiting to leave’ diverges from that of the previous group is in their rejection of the idea of waiting *until* they leave to start moving forwards with their lives. What develops in this chapter is a more dynamic view of waiting, from young people who believe any change must begin in Dzaleka, a place where they are taking steps to “build” or “better” themselves in an attempt to move closer to their goal of becoming. Before exploring this further and seeing how they express their agency in waiting, corresponding to their enactment of waithood in this context, it is important to briefly examine how, and why, they build this alternative portrayal of waiting.

“Resettlement is not realistic. If you focus on it, it will not happen”

Elaborating upon his remark above, William explains, “if you do nothing, nothing will happen”. Taking a closer look at how these young people portray resettlement and the impact they believe it has on young people in Dzaleka, we find that not only do they not see it as a realistic option, but they understand it is a “double-edged sword” (Brun, 2015) and must therefore seek alternative pathways to achieving their goals. Thus, firstly, many acknowledge their chances of being resettled are slim, aligning with the realities of resettlement worldwide highlighted in earlier chapters. William shares that the most important thing that can be done to help young people is to relax the restrictions as, “I know resettlement is almost impossible, less than 1% get resettled, I don’t know if my stats are good, it’s not possible for everyone”. David suggests resettlement is, “a probability not a right, it’s a chance, not something I can push, doesn’t mean if I have good grades I will get resettled, doesn’t mean if I spend 20 years in camp I will be resettled”. Whilst Prince, also Congolese like David and William, contends, “For me, resettlement is just a chance, not waiting for it, I need to study and work on this life, if it comes, just accept it and give thanks because people believe that out there life is better”.

Several participants draw particular attention to the notion that resettlement is even less of an option for Rwandans. Before exploring such comments, it is interesting to hear the thoughts shared by a community leader in an interview at an early stage of fieldwork. After showing me around a Church compound she runs as a CBO, implementing several projects including a pre-primary school and ‘eco-charcoal’ production for single mothers, Mama Cecilia, the female community leader for DRC began talking about young people as we sat down at the back of the church. She explains how they have nothing to do, many “just” doing sports or piecework, and suggests, most say, “we don’t come to the camp to study”. Whilst poor learning conditions contribute to this view and the fact many see, even if they get a diploma, they can do nothing

68 And therefore, perhaps referring to young people from her country in her comments.
with it, she notes that it is their belief that they will pursue their education when they arrive in the U.S. or Canada which convinces them “they don’t have to go here”. Asking what could be done to help these young people, she replies:

“They need to clear their minds, to think less about resettlement and more about ‘Tu dois vivre la ou tu es’. They must live where they are, carry on their lives, do their best here and live in Malawi, they should have their heads here. They don’t want to get older and realise they have spent all that time thinking of life in resettlement and forgot to live life now”

Those building this alternative view of waiting support her comments. Grounding a later section, in our second interview Loic was telling me how, for him, education is like a “door”, it is a way of changing your life and something he follows closely in the camp whilst volunteering as a security guard. However, he went on to suggest many young people, “take it for granted” because they are waiting until they are resettled to continue their studies. He adds that this is not the case for young Rwandans who are “serious” with their studies because, “they have problems with resettlement”. Highlighting nationality, Didi, from Rwanda, suggests young people arriving from DRC believe “it will be easy here as they will be resettled”, as such, they do not concentrate on school. Reminding us of her earlier comment regarding NGOs making young people “lazy”, she contends “resettlement makes youth not go ahead. They rely on it and end up poor”. She notes how those from Burundi and Rwanda, with little chance of being resettled now, as politicians back home are telling the UNHCR it is safe for their people to return, must therefore “put an effort in while we are in the camp”.

In Brun’s (2015) study of internally displaced Georgians, she contends hope of returning home sustains people, enabling them to continue their lives. However, she adds that this hope for return limits the potential pathways they consider when attempting to improve their present lives; referring to a woman who refuses to buy a house as she hopes to be returning soon. Brun (2015, p.28) concludes that such hope is therefore, “double-edged”. Hearing the comments of those discussed here, one could suggest that they have come to understand hope for resettlement is also a double-edged sword. Acknowledging he and his Rwandan peers are less likely to be resettled, Francis surmises, “Trust me, I am sure, if there was no resettlement, the camp would have gone far”, many young people think they will be leaving soon and drop out of school as a result. Echoing Mama Cecilia’s comments, he explains that whilst he tries to “push” his friends, “others are always thinking about resettlement, they think that is where they are going to change their lives, out there. But I believe it should start from here”. Moreover, suggesting that many young people are therefore, “just counting the days”, discussing his thoughts of the camp after his 17 years living there, Prince explains:
“It’s home, a safe place in Malawi. But when it comes to money it is bad. When a man of vision stays there, he is blocked, you never think of doing anything else. You think of eating, sleeping, seeing friends, waiting food… you see someone going for bulia and you think, yes, me too, I have hope. That’s why people don’t search for life back home, they have the ability to make it out here, so they just wait for resettlement, stuck. I can’t think of a project here, I’m stuck, but when I’m out, I’m free to think.”

In this passage, Prince provides an interesting account of his experiences on either edge of this metaphorical sword. He reveals how he also hoped of one day being resettled and how living in the camp, growing up with those around him leaving for resettlement, such a context sustains this hope. However, he acknowledges that, in doing so, young people become “blocked” or “stuck” and whilst he shares this condition when he is in the camp, living in Dowa to re-do his final year secondary school exams he is now able to think beyond resettlement.

Hearing such comments, it appears that time spent in Dzaleka is also an important variable differentiating the meaning one gives to resettlement; alluding to the ‘temporality of patience’ discussed in the previous chapter.

Compared to Congolese and Burundian young people mentioned in the previous chapter – those in the camp for shorter and ‘medium’ times respectively – listening to those who have spent longer in Dzaleka, many of whom from Rwanda, we can see how they now have less hope of being resettled. Brun (2015) suggests that the more time her participants spent in displacement, the more they see going home is less likely to happen, she contends they start to see the “cost of waiting” and it begins to lose its meaning. Returning to the importance of peers, it seems that this shift in thoughts is connected to seeing one’s friends leaving whilst they are forced to stay. Although this can sustain hope as Prince implies, at the same time, it results in growing despair. Transcending nationality, for those who have spent many years in Dzaleka, watching their friends leave, these young people have begun to lose hope of one day being resettled. Speaking with Prince and Francis, Congolese and Rwandan, they share experiences of growing up in the camp, seeing their friends leaving and hoping that one day people would also come round to their houses to celebrate before they left. Yet, they both go on to describe how over their many years in the camp they began to “understand camp life” and eventually as Prince suggests, “In short, you just lose hope in resettlement”. This is a point most clearly revealed by taking a walk with Henry.

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69 Prince’s ideas on the impact of ‘bulia’ echoed by Horst (2006a) in her research with Somalians in Dadaab whom she suggests “suffer from buufis”, this overbearing longing for resettlement.

70 Re-doing secondary school described by Honwana (2012) as a further signifier of Waihood.
Early on in our walking interview, Henry, Burundian and now 23 years old, brought me to a small area behind the main football pitch. He explained how this was a sad place for him and one which he does not visit often as it was where he and his friends used to play when they were younger. He shared how now, after 15 years in Dzaleka and only recently receiving refugee status, he has remained whilst all those friends have now been resettled. Adding, “Growing up, I would ask myself, don’t we have problems like them? Don’t we have challenges in the camp?” and that often he would go to his room and cry; “I saw all my friends going, I am left with no friends, I had no other option, I lost hope, I had to cry to let my thoughts go away”. Arriving at the secondary school, he explained how his final year exam results were good enough to apply for WUSC, an alternative way to achieve onwards physical mobility. However, lacking refugee status – whilst facing considerable competition – each year he applied he was rejected and by the time his family got status he was too old to apply again. Nonetheless, he is now, “trying another option, continuing my studies in Malawi”, which he believes will enable him to see a way forwards and become responsible for his current and future family.

Thus, time in Dzaleka perhaps a ‘thickener’ (Klocker, 2007) of young people’s agency, whilst the longer one spends in the camp the more they may realise the issues with waiting for resettlement and begin to look for alternative pathways, and that being Rwandan means this is often essential, it is clear that a number of young people whose stories build this chapter are Congolese and have spent less than five years in Dzaleka. That these Congolese young people, unlike those in the previous chapter, are all F1 could in many ways play a part in this, unable to ‘just’ wait and rely on familiar networks of support, forced to take their own steps and we return to this as the chapter unfolds. Nonetheless, what this section has revealed are the foundations of an alternative view of waiting. As such, if these young people acknowledge Dzaleka is a place of constraint and that a good or better life awaits them in the West, but at the same time, understand their chances of being resettled are limited and that waiting for this unlikely opportunity results in a condition of “stuckness”, it is important to now take a closer look at what these young people are doing on a daily basis whilst waiting to leave Dzaleka.

**Getting by and Getting out**

“Keeping busy” has been demonstrated to be the emic praxis through which young people in Dzaleka enact waithood. It was described as a term which acutely recognises how waiting is nuanced in contexts of encampment, it alludes to one’s navigation of particular constraints and the temporality it implies. However, it was suggested that different young people keep busy not only in different ways, but importantly, for different reasons. The previous chapter,

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71 Henry and his family in Dzaleka comparatively longer than fellow Burundians who participated in the study.
built one portrayal of waiting, it demonstrated how many keep busy in the sense of ‘getting by’ – coping with time and place – until they can finally leave Dzaleka through resettlement and move forwards with their lives. However, what we have seen and will see in this chapter is an alternative view of waiting and before we explore how these individuals enact this praxis in the sense of ‘getting out’, we must first briefly highlight how they too are also ‘getting by’.

Through their navigation of, and relationships with, people and place, Chapter 3 revealed how all young people who participated are learning to deal, struggle or cope with this context of constraint. Age as a ‘thickener’ (Klocker, 2007) of agency, the chapter suggested young people are potentially those with greater equity in the camp and capacity to act, which assists them to do so. Exploring the role of peers, the previous chapter expanded this discussion, before demonstrating how getting by also speaks to young people coping with, or enduring time, in addition to place. Such discussions were built out of the experiences and narratives gathered from many participants, including those explored in this chapter and are therefore not repeated in detail here. As noted, William shared how education was initially an important distraction, helping him to avoid the dangers of the camp and the negative thoughts that can emerge out of idleness. Francis explained how, “this kind of life is like a school, it is like an education”, he described how he has learnt to be determined and to fight with the challenges he faces in Dzaleka. Several spoke of piecework, including Francis’s remote work and Prince who stated, “when I am hungry, I know what to do”, now knowing where he can make money helping people build houses. Many stated that they rely on Mapokezi to survive, David suggested one cannot be safe without it and Atu referred to a more illicit pathway of generating income through sex work. Several discussed volunteering, Augustin and Loic explained how doing so helps them to deal with the challenges of living alone in the camp.

Yet, despite also needing to get by and cope with the challenges they face in Dzaleka, it appears that this second group of young people – composed of those who, on one hand have spent more years in the camp, or on the other, came more recently but are now living alone in Dzaleka – also express their agency in a further manner. I contend that another of Lister’s (2004) forms of agency, ‘getting out’, is a productive frame to understand how and why these young people are keeping busy and in doing so, shed light on their enactment of waithood in this context.

Thus, whilst getting by refers to a personal and everyday form of agency, alluding to the ways one struggles to survive and therefore, speaking to more ‘thin’ (Klocker, 2007) expressions of agency, Lister (2004) defines getting out as a personal and strategic form of agency, where one takes steps to get out of poverty. Described as the “officially sanctioned response to poverty” (Redmond, 2009, p.546), Lister suggests the two main avenues for achieving this are
through education and employment; part-time work and volunteering as stepping stones back into full employment. However, she explains that, whilst expressing this agency by negotiating these avenues, one must recall – as Giddens (1984) contends – these pathways are, “forged by structural and cultural factors, which can assist or obstruct the exercise of that agency” (Lister, 2004, p.145). As such, the extent to which one can ‘get out’ or ‘escape’ poverty varies, depending on the different resources they can call upon. Perhaps accounting for why relatively fewer young people can be seen to express this further expression of agency, Lister (2004, p.147) suggests, “where personal and other resources are limited and the barriers are high, strategic agency is likely to be relatively weak”.

Although getting out is conceptually orientated in the West towards escaping poverty, a condition in which many in Dzaleka find themselves, I aim to expand the term by applying it to young people’s efforts at getting out of, or escaping, waithood; a condition undoubtedly tied to one’s economic state. I contend that the young people discussed in this chapter are keeping busy not only in the sense of getting by, but also with a view to getting out of waithood and thus, enact ‘youth’ in Dzaleka as they say it should be experienced, as a time of becoming, of transitioning into social adulthood. Whilst this is partially achieved by all through the traits of independence and responsibility they develop when learning to cope (see Chapter 4), I argue that this further group of young people, by taking steps to move forwards with their lives whilst in Dzaleka, as opposed to waiting until they leave, are using the camp as a nodal point to build their lives and transition, albeit towards an uncertain destination and for an uncertain duration. Exploring the discussions had with these young people and the observations carried out during fieldwork, it appears they take such “steps” in two main ways, firstly through a pathway of formal learning and secondly, through perhaps more of a “mindset” to paraphrase William’s earlier comment, by “making sense” where they are.

“Education is a door”

In Chapter 3 we saw how Dzaleka is portrayed as a place of learning in a broader sense, informal learning transpiring beyond the classroom, young people gaining experiences, behaviour, and skills necessary for present and future lives. Yet, omitted there was an exploration of the importance – despite the challenges they face with regards to this – several young people like William place on learning in its ‘narrower’ sense (Punch, 2002); whether at secondary school, JRS courses, vocational skills classes or JWL, DAFI and WUSC post-secondary, higher education opportunities. William shares how on arrival he saw he needed to be busy and involvement in these short courses was his way of doing so, distracting him from the dangers and restrictions of camp life. A point made in the previous chapter, some enrolling in such activities to pass the time. However, William adds that eventually he began
to “view things differently” and participation became a way to “better” himself, now a different person as a result, assisting him to “take steps” to coming closer to marry and start a business. Before taking a closer look at the meaning he and several others give to formal learning in Dzaleka, it is useful to zoom out and locate this discussion within the humanitarian set-up and developmental discourses governing Dzaleka and many camps worldwide.

“Education enlightens. Education frees. Education restores hope” (A quote from a case study in Dzaleka on JWL’s website)

As touched on in the introductory chapter, young people are navigating not only their own ideas of who or what they are and should be but also those definitions or categories being placed upon them. Most noticeably in humanitarian settings is the drive from organisations for young people to put aside productive work or ‘traditional’ household roles and focus on classroom education (Honwana, 2012; Tefferi, 2007); often portrayed by organisations in refugee camps as, “the key to life” (Bellino, 2018, p.543). In Dzaleka, this is evident in the frequent awareness raising campaigns by NGOs that speak of the importance of education and in particular, Plan International’s ‘Rights of the Child’ project that stresses children’s right to school and not be forced to perform economically productive roles at home. Moreover, leaflets for enrolment in short courses can often be found on notice boards and in restaurants around the camp. In a setting where progressing with one’s education is strongly encouraged, Tefferi (2007) contends that Western ideals of school attendance and formal academic achievement can begin to replace more traditional markers of marriage, employment or parenthood in revealing social age. Resulting in a situation where, “adolescents are finding it necessary to redefine their future goals and aspirations and postpone traditional social roles and responsibilities to fit those dictated by modern education systems” (Tefferi, 2007, p.302).

Yet, in contexts where young people are told to excel in school but their efforts are not matched with access to employment (Honwana, 2012), such discourses and ensuing practices have been critiqued. Bellino (2018, p.543) argues that the encouragement of a “single linear trajectory of successful adulthood shaped through the pursuit of formal post-secondary schooling is unwittingly setting refugee youth up for failed adulthood”; many face structural challenges in accessing these opportunities and the minority who can, later faced with the predicament of accepting work intended for “unschooled” people or waiting for further socioeconomic or spatial shifts (2018, p.552). In her study of youth in Kakuma refugee camp, Bellino (2018) concludes that, much like in Dzaleka as we will see, although education can offer a way out for a minority through WUSC, for many, the consequence of this educational

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drive is school existing to produce more school and young people placing greater importance on participation in courses for certificates over the actual learning involved. Nonetheless, it is within these overarching discourses that young people’s thoughts of education must be considered, bearing in mind a context which offers few alternative opportunities for young people, and what we see below is how several do suggest this is a way for them to move forwards with their lives in Dzaleka. To guide the discussions that follow we now turn to conversations had with 19-year-old Atu from Rwanda.

Some months into fieldwork and discussing with Nelson how the ‘snowballing’ sampling technique was producing an uneven representation of males to females – perhaps due to the relatively greater ease of speaking with fellow male young people – Nelson suggested he could introduce me to a girl living in Blantyre with whom he had previously spoken through his role with the JRS Psychosocial department. Arriving at Atu’s house the next day and finding her sitting outside feeding a child, she agreed to participate and went to find a bench before inviting us into the house. Inside, several young children were moving around, the room illuminated by sunlight beaming through small holes in the tarpaulin and straw roof. After explaining further who I was and why I was in the camp, Nelson made it clear that this time his presence was as an interpreter and not through his position with JRS.

Having lived all her life in Dzaleka, Atu is the main care giver in her family, participating in sexual work while her father spends his time at bars in the Blantyre zone. During our interview, Atu told us about some challenges young people face in Dzaleka, discussing girls specifically. She explains how many are single mothers, forced to leave school after getting pregnant and who, after giving birth and attempting to go back to school are told there is no longer space; as such, “they are just moving around, doing bad things”. Interesting here is that Atu was indirectly describing her own situation to us through this account of others. Something partly confirmed later when she shared how she wanted to return to school and finish her education, but that she could not get a space, adding that the only solution to help her and other young girls was to provide more spaces at school. Bearing in mind her view could potentially have been impacted by how she perhaps saw Nelson and I as people who could assist her return to school, through Nelson, I asked why education was so important for her. She replies:

“It is important, you can go somewhere and understand English. People may ask you if you have gone to school or speak English, for example Plan, a job, or teachers. If you say no, they will think you are useless. Also, people in Lilongwe or NGOs want to give skills to single mothers, but if you have not gone to school then they won’t help”

73 Speaking with her about her absence from school.
As our interview ended, I asked her where she saw herself in five years, she replied, “I cannot know, because I am not going to school”. Returning to speak with Atu a few months later, she shares that “positive” changes had happened. Now attending Plan’s ‘Life Skills’ course and JRS’s secondary school in Form 1. Asking again how she sees her future now, she states, “I am still young, it can help with my future, I have seen those who have finished school and now they are volunteering with organisations”.

Before expanding upon some of the points Atu makes, it is worth noting that whilst those discussed in the previous chapter may see themselves as “stuck” living in Dzaleka and waiting for resettlement to move forwards with their lives, this is not to say they do not also value formal education in and of itself. Many have the goal of continuing with their studies once they are resettled and all young people, perhaps influenced by the aforementioned humanitarian discourse, conveyed the idea that the “good” life means to be educated and that education gives “hope”. However, it remains that the challenges of pursuing this in Dzaleka and the inability of utilising the skills they would learn, combined with the expected education they will receive when they are resettled, means many, as Nestor mentioned, believe “school is a waste of time in the camp”. Yet, for those here, we find this humanitarian drive for education holds more sway in their present lives, surfacing in their daily actions and discourses; formal learning in Dzaleka materialising as an important pathway for them to “better” themselves, develop skills, take steps towards achieving goals and thus, escape waithood.

Perhaps the first point to make is how the pathway of formal learning enables these young people to achieve some degree of social (inter-generational) mobility whilst living in Dzaleka, using these opportunities, as William states, to “redefine” who they want to be and thus, decide their ‘own’ markers of social adulthood. The potentially unsurprising initial layer of this lies in their belief that pursuing education in the camp enables them to see, think and lay the foundations for their futures – wherever these may be – as supposed to, “just thinking of tomorrow”, as Patrick says of other young people in the camp. An earlier chapter suggested the camp is a constraint because it detrimentally impacts young people’s ability to achieve their aspirations or even make plans and that as such they are going forward blindly. Atu’s narrative both supports and expands this. Initially asking Atu where she saw herself in five years, she replies that because she was not currently going to school, she could not know. However, when later telling us she was taking classes with Plan and had been enrolled in school, she explains how this will help with her future and assist her to achieve her aspiration of volunteering.74

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74 A point incidentally revealing the limited perceived pathways available on completion of education.
In Loic’s story, we hear how, living alone, he confronts a plethora of challenges, having to work, find food and follow his education without the family assistance that many others receive. Nonetheless, education is key for him, most significantly his English lessons that he fits in three times a week around his job as a guard for an NGO compound. Asking him what he finds important in daily life he replies:

“School, to study. A job can help in the short run, you get money, but school is forever. They can close Dzaleka today, if I didn’t learn then life would be very tough afterwards”

Taking this idea further in our second interview he suggests, “Kubadilisha maisha [life changing], there is one way to change your life and that is through education. Education is a door”. Echoing these sentiments is Augustin, Loic’s friend, who, having completed a short course in Agriculture with JRS is currently also taking English classes alongside TiH’s plumbing certificate. He explains, “[The] world today is led by people who are passing through school, without school it is like you did nothing, you live in vain”, adding that with agricultural skills he hopes to “build” his future. Whilst Patrick, nearing the end of his JWL diploma, shares:

“If you drop out of school, you are not thinking far in the future, because when someone goes to school they are thinking, after finishing I will do this to change the community, or in the future I will do my PhD, have an organisation or be a doctor. But these who drop out, they are not thinking of anything in the future, just tomorrow”

Whilst it is difficult to ascertain the extent to which the humanitarian educational drive might have influenced these young people over the years – Atu and Patrick, Rwandan and having lived their whole lives in Dzaleka, Loic and Augustin, Congolese and having arrived alone more recently – it is clear they hold a strong belief that pursuing their education in the camp is an important way of being able to visualise and work towards future goals; or at least maintain hope in one day achieving these, in a setting which otherwise constrains one’s abilities for doing so. Whilst the relationship between formal learning and thoughts for the future has been documented (Bellino, 2018; Levinson & Holland, 1996; Winthrop, 2011) and is perhaps not such a surprise given a context which provides few other opportunities, it is also interesting to see how these opportunities provide more than hope alone but play an important role in terms of influencing one’s perceptions of self and their capacity for becoming “someone”.

Portrayed as central to the inter-generational shift into social adulthood, the previous chapter expanded the idea of becoming someone by exploring the meaning young people give to being a refugee and how this impacts one’s sense of inclusion and belonging. We heard several explain how this was not achievable in Dzaleka and that they must wait for resettlement to realise this. However, for this second group of young people it appears that
participating in formal learning whilst in Dzaleka not only opens up their thoughts of the future, but it provides an alternative, non-traditional pathway to becoming and moving forwards with this transition. To introduce this point, we can explore Loic’s comments on the importance he places on JRS’s ‘English as a Foreign Language’ (EFL) classes.

The lingua franca in the camp, spoken by UNHCR, GoM and NGO employees, it should be noted that all young people generally give importance to learning English. Whilst much is acquired amongst peers and through TV series, attending EFL classes is key, especially for recent Congolese arrivals. Many of these relatively newer arrivals explain how learning English is crucial for increasing their social capital and being able to access greater opportunities in the camp, in addition to being able to communicate with people when they get to the West. However, for a few, like Loic, also arriving recently, but now living alone unlike many of these other young Congolese people, such learning assumes a further meaning. During our walk, whilst discussing what he wants to be doing in five years, Loic asserts how he needs to concentrate on improving his English so he can use the marketing degree he started in DRC, adding that, “it is impossible to be someone without English”. Following up on this in our second interview I asked him what he had meant by this and, as we heard in an earlier chapter, he explains:

“Well obviously, someone is already someone. But I mean to be someone is to have power to lead, to be responsible in the community. If you [I] don’t learn, then you wouldn’t be able to communicate with me right now, you would be looking for an interpreter”

Reinforced by other young people’s comments which suggest learning English enables them to “speak for myself”, in a context where one is often perceived and perceives oneself as powerless (Boer, 2015), facing obstacles in almost all spheres, in work, school and thoughts for the future, Loic could be understood in this passage to be suggesting that being able to speak English is a way of regaining some sense of position in and control over his life. A point also alluded to in Atu’s comment on being seen as useless without the ability to speak English. Yet, beyond this example of learning English, one can see in the comments of several others how formal learning in general impacts one’s perception of self, enabling them to move closer towards becoming someone.

We see this in another of Loic’s comments, “if you don’t learn, then you can’t be someone or president”, but also where Augustin suggests, if you have not passed through school, “it is like you did nothing”, to which he later adds, “school can change the mind of a person”. Comments which on the whole are not contested by those in the previous chapter. However, where the
difference emerges is whether or not they pursue, or are able to pursue, such opportunities in the camp and the following excerpt from Prince draws this together eloquently. In our first interview in his room at the camp he shares:

“Some young people believe school will help them to be someone. If you are living here, but not having work or school, you will be nobody. People are not born to be refugees, one day I will be out of here, so I need certificates to function in towns. But people are different. Some young people are thinking they just need to survive. For me, education is the target and sport is the distraction. I see I have failed, I am doing this for my children, so they don’t have to make the mistakes my parents made, so I chose school as it is the only key to success”

In this passage, 22-year-old Prince from DRC, in Dzaleka for 17 years and now living alone since the death of his parents some years ago, draws out a divide amongst young people. Whilst some focus on “surviving”, those in the previous chapter – portrayed there as individuals who are ‘getting by’ – he explains that others, like him, understand that formal learning is an important route to “success” and without it, “you will be nobody”. Moreover, although we can see the humanitarian discourse expressed through such comments, we also find that Bellino’s (2018) premise potential holds some weight here in that participation in courses for certificates has perhaps taken on greater importance than the actual learning involved, enabling him to one day “function” in towns. Before concluding this point and exploring a second pathway these young people use to move forwards with their lives whilst in Dzaleka, it is important to briefly shed light on the physical mobility that formal learning can also enable.

Whilst clearly connected to social mobility, it appears that participation in educational opportunities is also seen as an important route towards physical movement out of Dzaleka. We see this implied through Loic’s description of education as a “door” and also by Patrick in his response to what he would do if there was no longer an opportunity for resettlement, “I do not focus on resettlement. All I care about now is studies. Maybe after I finish them, that can help me to get to a safer place”. Furthermore, this is expressed by 22-year-old Thalia as she describes her thoughts for the future:

“I thought I would find another place to go, I can’t stay in the camp my whole life. If I don’t have identity, I am wasting my time, I have to move. But I got education, so with that I think I can be anywhere. If I keep studying and I have my energy I can do something”.

However, it is not until later in our interview that Thalia sheds light upon how exactly she and a few others intend to use formal learning as a way of leaving Dzaleka:
“My points at secondary school weren’t bad, but the point of going is to look for a scholarship. My English wasn’t good enough for WUSC. Spaces are limited in WUSC, students study hard because if you get that chance there is nothing else you will look for, you will study hard to get the scholarship, or you’re done, your life will be miserable”

Combining resettlement with university education at a number of Canadian universities, the World University Service of Canada’s (WUSC) ‘Student Refugee Program’ operates in numerous settings of displacement worldwide. Although this, like UNHCR-coordinated resettlement, is an opportunity for a small minority – only taking 130 students per year from the more than 25 countries it works in – this is a core aspiration for many young people in Dzaleka. Henry described failing in four applications and Arthur shared in the previous chapter how without WUSC or DAFI, “my dreams would die”. Moreover, exploring Patrick’s comment above we find that his shift in thoughts, much like William’s, from education as a way of keeping busy to, “All I care about now is studies”, emerged after he made it past the first round of WUSC interviews. Waiting for this opportunity is in many ways similar to waiting for resettlement, and clearly, moving to Canada influences motivations for applying. Nonetheless, what differentiates it is not only its focus on higher education, but also, the initial steps needed to be taken in Dzaleka to be chosen. In this sense, we see young people preparing for WUSC can still be understood as using the camp, this temporary bridge, as a nodal point to “build” themselves, or their “CV”, moving forwards with their lives whilst living there.

As Thalia contends, “if you get that chance […] you will study hard”, referring to the secondary school results needed to apply for WUSC. Beyond this first step, in addition to fluency in English or French, many describe how one must have developed their “CV” to stand a good chance of being accepted. Discussing the opportunities he has been “exposed” to in Dzaleka, Arthur explains these were all things to “add to the CV” and Francine, although waiting for resettlement herself, shares how, faced with nothing else to do after school and needing to keep busy, volunteering is key for young people to “build their CV”, adding that, “They consider what you have volunteered for”. Bringing some clarity to who “they” may be, speaking with the coordinator of ‘Naweza’, an organisation focussed on helping girls in the camp, she echoes how volunteering “develops CVs”, stating, “If they want WUSC, they need to volunteer”. Discussing what he has done since leaving school, Henry fleshes out this point:

“From secondary school I volunteered at primary; marking, giving assessments, supervising exams, weekly assessments, helping to mark. Six months, not paid, not a coin. Only thing I got was my CV. From there I went to hospital, whilst also learning at AppFactory, I could balance half-half. Before joining the hospital, I was doing full time at AppFactory from morning until sunset, 7:30am to 5:30pm”
Combining learning – AppFactory teaching coding skills – with volunteering to develop his CV, this term, whilst potentially emerging out of humanitarian lingo, has perhaps become a synonym for oneself; again drawing attention to Bellino’s (2018) idea of the accumulation of certificates becoming more important than the experiences they represent. To draw this discussion of learning to a close, it is important to take a closer look at which young people are expressing these sentiments, who is developing their CV to be chosen for WUSC, but also which young people in general are placing this importance on formal learning whilst in Dzaleka.

“Now I have grown, I know WUSC is only a small chance, not a guarantee. I hear back from WUSC in February, if it is positive, I will follow it, in the meantime I will pursue Diang. School is school anywhere after all, but WUSC is different because it has resettlement. For Rwandans, resettlement is not strong chance, so WUSC is the only hope” (Arthur, 20, Rwandan)

Whilst needing to be aged between 18 and 24 prescribes who may apply for WUSC, from the participants, Arthur, Patrick, Thalia and Henry spoke of currently or previously making applications, all of whom Rwandan with the exception of Henry who is Burundian. To understand this, it is first important to remember earlier discussions regarding how people from these countries are considered, despite what the UNHCR maintains, as less likely to be chosen for resettlement. Several young people explained earlier how young Rwandan, and to a lesser extent Burundian people, are more “serious” with their education or “put an effort in while we are in the camp… we work hard to find a future on our own” as Didi suggests, because, as Loic states, “they have problems with resettlement”. This point is stressed by Arthur above, but also by Prince who explains:

“Most people in the WUSC program are Burundian and Rwandan because their resettlement is not on a good status. The only way to do it is WUSC. They believe school is the only way to get out. Whilst other Congolese think they must receive something because there is war in our country. That is according to my experience”

As an earlier discussion explored, beyond nationality, although clearly connected, time spent in Dzaleka plays an important part in influencing one’s thoughts of resettlement and formal learning in the camp. Those young people who have spent many years in Dzaleka, mostly Rwandan or Burundian, eventually lose hope in this double-edged sword. David, 29 years old, from DRC and arriving in Dzaleka four years ago, explains:
“For people born in the camp and lived there for a long time”, they realise the camp is not temporary, so they choose education. They choose education because they know through this there are opportunities for leaving the camp”

Yet, whilst Prince and David’s statements support the line of enquiry in the previous chapter in that many of those discussed there are Congolese, having spent relatively fewer years in Dzaleka, it remains that, not only Prince and David, but also others building this chapter, including William, Loic, and Augustin are Congolese and all apart from Prince have been in the camp for less than five years. Although they are not trying for WUSC, too old to apply, they do see formal learning in Dzaleka as a way of “bettering” themselves and becoming “someone” as seen earlier. This could be because they are all F1 and therefore, have no choice but to take their own steps to move forwards, but also because they had all been enrolled at university before fleeing and as such, understand its importance.

Although more research would be required, their use of Dzaleka to build themselves could partly be explained through Epstein’s (2010) notion of the ‘education refugee’, where individuals, “have the means to seek asylum across borders to access education not otherwise available”. As noted, more longitudinal data – perhaps unlikely to be shared in its entirety – is needed to fully understand the multifaceted reasons young people have for arriving in Dzaleka. Yet, if we reconsider Francis’s comment that, “Most refugees don’t flee because of reasons, they just come because their friends call saying here are opportunities”, whilst some might have come to Dzaleka hearing of Congolese high chances of resettlement, perhaps for those mentioned in this chapter hearing about the learning opportunities offered there and although clearly facing real insecurities at home, many having had family killed, such opportunities could be – as Bellino (2018) finds for Kakuma – a pull factor to Malawi, a peaceful country far from their own.

It is perhaps inaccurate to suggest these young people are endeavouring to transition into social adulthood on their ‘own’ terms, as they are attempting to do so through the humanitarian system structuring their lives. Nevertheless, it appears that, faced with an overarching context of constraint (and with very few alternatives) these young people are using the camp, through its opportunities for formal learning, as a nodal point to “build” their lives or “better” themselves. In doing so, it appears that Tefferi’s (2007) suggestion that Western ideals of school attendance and formal academic achievement have begun to replace more traditional markers of marriage, employment, or parenthood in revealing social age, holds some weight in this context. The aforementioned humanitarian discourse of education seems to have

75 Some months after fieldwork was finished, wanting to clarify what David understood as “a long time”, I enquired through Whatsapp as to how many years this may be and he suggested, “about 10 to 18 years”.

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considerable influence for these young people. As William suggests, the camp is a place where he and many discussed in this chapter can “redefine” who they want to be and we have seen they are trying to do so through formal learning, able to see their futures and take steps towards becoming someone through this. However, whilst this learning may enable hope, and offer a chance for social and physical mobility, it remains that these young people remain stuck and this is perhaps evermore so for some young Rwandans who, if camp rumours are to be believed, are unlikely to be chosen for WUSC, now seen as able to return safely to Rwanda.

“Finding meaning” and “making sense”

As we came to the end of our walk, passing the growing queue for Mapokezi and arriving back at JWL’s compound, William began to conclude his story. He remarked that, being “exposed” to these opportunities whilst still facing numerous restrictions, after his five years in Dzaleka, “at least I am not nothing”. Hearing this and being reminded of other young people’s comments of being “someone”, I asked William his thoughts on this phrase. He replied:

“Being someone is finding meaning where you are. I mean, people don’t find meaning here, it’s like, ‘ok I am here, I won’t do anything, education in a camp, I would not do that, I am a refugee anyway, even if I get education, I will remain like that’. There is this language in the camp, when you ask someone, ‘so what do you do?’, they say, ‘there is nothing to do in the camp’, but that doesn’t exist in my language. I don’t have time to do this because I have so much things to do. So, it is like, I am making sense here, but viewing life this way here, is preparing me, umm… to be exposed to other things that will be in another life. I think it is a continuation, it is not like, there is me, William here, but when I get out of here they will remove my brain and I will be another person, no, it is the same person who is moved from place to place. So, if you don’t make sense here, maybe it will be very difficult to make sense out there”

In this final excerpt from William, we find a second pathway, or something perhaps better described as a “mindset” to paraphrase William from elsewhere, a way of “viewing life”, that enables him and several others mentioned in this chapter to see the camp as a place where they can “prepare”, build themselves and move forwards. William suggests that becoming “someone” – key for transitioning into social adulthood – is about, “finding meaning where you are”, something he goes on to describe as “making sense”. Hearing this, we are reminded of Honwana’s (2012, p.11) description of youth as, “A time of growth, of searching for meanings and belonging”. Thus, one could suggest that William and his peers are therefore enacting youth as it ‘should’ be experienced (as a time of becoming), and thus, escaping, evading (or perhaps just putting off) the ever-looming waithood that otherwise awaits them.
He compares this approach with those who, “don’t find meaning here”, those who he earlier described as young people “defining” themselves by their restrictions. In the previous chapter, several young people expressed these sentiments, they explain how, being “stuck” and unable to “belong”, they can not “become” whilst living in Dzaleka. As such, resettlement was suggested to be the only solution for enabling one to be able to move forwards with their life. It is perhaps an oversimplification to say such individuals are not finding meaning where they are, earlier chapters demonstrated the different meanings they give to their experiences of Dzaleka. However, potentially what William alludes to in this passage is that which Mama Cecilia describes as the need for, “living where you are”, of having one’s “head here”, of being present and making sense now as opposed to focussing on what may happen if you are resettled. We see this in the comments of several young people whose stories build this chapter. Prince and David speak of needing to “work on this life”, David adds it is important to have an “open mind in the camp” to access opportunities, and Francis explains how the change he wants in his life needs to start here, “I have to live the life that life gives me”.

In the introduction to his book, ‘Globalization: The Human Consequences’, Bauman (1998) contends that in our globalising world – this “man made wilderness” (p.59) – “The freedom to move, perpetually a scarce and unequally distributed commodity, fast becomes the main stratifying factor” (p.2). He suggests this results in a condition that is “radically unequal”, some becoming “global”, capable of mobility, whilst others remain “fixed in locality” and that it is the globals who are the ones making the rules. The consequences of this, he explains, is that locals, those who are “grounded”, slowly begin to lose their “meaning-generating and meaning-negotiating capacity and are increasingly dependent on sense-giving and interpreting actions which they do not control” (p.3).

One can see this manifest in camps through the minority world concepts and assumptions imposed by NGOs onto majority world realities. Visible in terms of generational stages (Punch & Tisdall, 2012; Tisdall & Punch, 2012), but also through the patron-client rapport implemented by humanitarian organisations, that entrenches dependency (Zetter, 1996) and means people are forced to conform to a certain ‘refugee’ identity in order to pursue their agenda (Zetter, 1991). On one hand, it does appear that some of these young people ‘fixed in locality’, perhaps unable to do otherwise, acknowledge and accept these more dominant depictions of what it means to be a refugee, employing what William describes as, “the language of the camp” and therefore waiting for resettlement. These young people, as noted in the previous chapter, although physically present in the camp, maintain the feeling of belonging somewhere else (Brun, 2001). However, several, those discussed in this chapter, are potentially challenging Bauman’s premise.
For other ‘locals’, those who have understood the cost of waiting, having lived in Dzaleka for many years and seeing their friends leave whilst they remain, those who are Rwandan and no longer expect to be resettled and even some recent arrivals from DRC who came alone and have found opportunities not available back home, we have seen how they are rejecting the essentialist notion that to be displaced means to be “out of place” (Bash & Zezlina-Phillips, 2006). These young people – perhaps taught through their participation in education “how to live” as one girl remarks – have their minds in the camp, are making sense where they are and by redefining the ‘traditional’ transition into social adulthood are moving forwards with their lives. That said, although these young people may be finding new ways to become, in a context which provides few others, one should recall that the pathway of formal education is grounded in Western humanitarian ideology and as such, it appears this is still an expression of ‘thin’ agency (Klocker, 2007) and the ‘globals’ are perhaps still those making the rules.

Concluding remarks

This chapter aimed to explore how some young people in Dzaleka are taking steps in an attempt to move forwards with their lives whilst in the camp. Differentiating their experience of waiting, and their enactment of waithood to those in the previous chapter, here we saw how several young people are keeping busy in the sense of ‘getting out’. Whilst they acknowledge the challenges of living in the camp and understand a better life awaits them in the West, we heard how these individuals are not waiting for this unlikely chance to move forwards with their lives. Time spent in Dzaleka potentially a ‘thickener’ of young people’s agency, those seeing their friends leave over the years, despite initially giving them hope, have lost this for resettlement; young Rwandans in particular understanding they must find alternative pathways to move forwards. Moreover, we heard from Congolese young people living alone in Dzaleka who also recognise resettlement as a double-edged sword, instead looking to use their time in waiting more meaningfully.

I argued that for these young people, the camp, this temporary bridge, is a nodal point on which they are building themselves through formal learning, by having their heads in the camp and making sense where they are. The latter a crucial way of thinking to be able to start to move forwards with your life and the prior – although not a pathway of their own creation – an alternative way of becoming “someone” and making the transition into social adulthood. These individuals therefore attempt to enact their generational stage as it ‘should’ be experienced, a time of becoming; youth and the camp both appearing to be temporary stages for self-development. Contributing to discussions of livelihoods in displacement (see Horst, 2006), these findings show camps as places enabling young people to gather assets, and human capital in particular; gaining assets pertaining to more than ‘just’ coping alone (Jacobsen,
2014). However, speaking to Jansen’s (2016) notion of ‘humanitarian urbanism’, it also supports studies that highlight how the accumulation of such assets is nonetheless strongly governed by humanitarian organisations who retain much of the agency (Skran & Easton-Calabria, 2020).

Nevertheless, in many ways, these young people remain stuck, constrained by the challenges they must face living in the camp and their inability to put into practice the knowledge they may learn there. As Laura remarks, “I am doing all this while waiting for a future I don’t know”; it appears therefore, that these young people are building themselves for an uncertain future, not knowing for how long they must wait nor where these steps may take them. That said, key here is that although they may have reached the point of losing hope in resettlement, this has not yet come to pass for their goals of moving forwards with their lives in Dzaleka. Thus, what we see here is yet another example of young people creative in waithood, navigating (and perhaps circumnavigating) many of the challenges young people worldwide are confronting today, albeit in a context which in many ways positions ‘youth’ with greater equity and opportunities.
I begin this final chapter by sharing a story told to me by 22-year-old Thalia from Rwanda because it poignantly conveys the feelings of hope, anticipation, of waiting endured and growing despair expressed by many of the young people who participated in this study. Alluding to bulia, third-country resettlement to the “good life”, the story highlights the complex and dynamic rapport young people, and no doubt many in settings of encampment, have with one of the UNHCR’s ‘durable solutions’. It speaks to the resilience of displaced people to get on with their lives, to “accept” their situations and “survive”, whilst drawing attention to the consequences of waiting for an opportunity that does not materialise; resettlement, a double-edged sword, which, although facilitates hope for the future, at the same time has the potential to restrain one’s present capacities for moving forwards with their lives. Thalia, like several others, has understood the issues with waiting to leave Dzaleka to move forwards with her life and is instead taking steps within the camp to do so. Nonetheless, as for many of her peers, it is clear from our various discussions that hope in this unlikely chance lingers on.

I started this research with the goal of expanding existing understandings of camps by shedding light on a youth perspective of Dzaleka refugee camp in Malawi. Grounded in recent studies that have identified camps as places of contradiction, of indistinction – as places of constraint and humanitarian control, but where routines and relationships of everyday life continue to unfold – I sought to demonstrate if, and how, young people make sense of these tensions structuring their lives. A youth lens crucial given the adult, and growing child centricity of existing studies, and interesting due to the parallels between ‘youth’ and the ‘camp’. Both supposedly temporary and liminal phenomena, places of transit and times of becoming, but
each increasing experienced by many worldwide as permanence and stickness. Thus, the study asked: What can a lens of youth in waiting bring to an understanding of the camp? A question answered by exploring the meaning(s) young people give to their experiences of Dzaleka and utilising ‘waithood’ as a frame for approaching their stories of living there.

In this final chapter, I draw the thesis to a close by firstly relocating the gap towards which I aimed to contribute, highlighting the analytical frames employed to do, and drawing attention to their utility for expanding existing conceptualisations of the camp. I then briefly highlight the core findings of the thesis, before discussing some of the main themes that thread through the preceding chapters, concluding with some thoughts for policy and reflections upon certain ethical concerns that have continued through various stages of the study.

**Locating the gap and contributing to existing studies**

As noted in the introductory chapter, a dichotomy is visible in existing camp studies between approaching camps as places of constraint and confinement, where an assemblage of actors constituting the humanitarian regime manage bare life, versus the idea of agentic individuals living in camps, confronting challenges, but at the same time trying to recreate what has been disrupted through their displacement and get on with their lives. To comprehend this messy reality, a ‘third way’ – grounded in recent ‘bottom-up’ studies – has emerged of understanding these places as sites of contradiction, indistinction and ambiguity. A shift largely driven by the spill over of the camp into urban life (Martin, 2015). The notion of ‘humanitarian urbanism’ highlighted as a productive frame for understanding the nuanced urban space surfacing in camps where, although divisions between camp/non-camp, refugee/citizen are ever-blurring, time and space remains highly structured by humanitarian institutions. Theoretically situating itself here, the study attempted to reveal whether and if so, how young people’s thoughts of encampment can expand such discussions and develop current understandings of these spaces that continue to proliferate landscapes of displacement. To do so, notions of ‘waiting’ and ‘waithood’ were suggested to be productive lenses to explore the data gathered during fieldwork, and mediums through which to contribute to existing literature.

Whilst studies have approached settings of encampment through the notion of waiting, this has mostly been done with the effect of building earlier understandings of camps as places of constraint, those managing these spaces using waiting as a technology of governance and declaration of power. However, this study attempted to address what Bandak and Janeja (2020) describe as the “poetics of waiting”, how those actually waiting make sense of it and actively express their “agency-in-waiting” (Brun, 2015). I aimed to build upon limited bottom-up studies that have explored waiting’s modalities in refugee camps, expanding these by applying the lens to young people. Waiting’s utility and relevance as an analytical frame
revealed, and something brought to light through the notion of ‘humanitarian urbanism’, by the highly structured nature of waiting in refugee camps. People’s experiences of ‘waiting to leave’ divided into a number of required bureaucratic steps and stages determined by the seemingly unmoving humanitarian time of the camp. Yet, perhaps more importantly, such a lens was employed due to its specific manifestation for those who are no longer children but yet to attain the locally defined markers of social adulthood. It is waiting’s multifaceted nature for refugee youth that heightens its capacity for better understanding young people’s experiences of encampment. Such individuals wait not only to leave as many are in such settings, but to “become”, to move forwards with their lives and transition into social adulthood.

Moreover, intertwined with the notion of waiting, and a lens also lacking in recent ‘third way’ studies, is one of waithood that was employed to approach young people’s stories of Dzaleka. With much traction in Africa, the notion of waithood speaks to a worldwide generation of individuals “forced to live in a liminal, neither-here-nor-there state; no longer children who require care, yet they are not yet considered mature social adults” (Honwana, 2012, p.3).

Unable to take on the roles and responsibilities locally attributed to this next generational stage, studies have explored the ways young people enact waithood, this suspension of adulthood, in different contexts. Moving past ‘deficient’ or ‘crisis’ approaches, young people portrayed as helpless, dependent and bored (Masquelier, 2013), this thesis aimed to build upon more recent studies that approach waithood as a productive period of improvisation, experimentation and creativity in search of coping mechanisms (Honwana, 2014). I sought to expand such discussions by exploring waithood’s enactment in a refugee camp. The lens fruitful for its ability to consider the multifacetedness of intergenerational transitions, looking beyond narratives of stuckness alone but considering actual experiences that would imply ‘partial’ transitions. Moreover, it was deemed particularly resonant for young people in camps due to its intimate focus on the relationship between inter-generational transitions and prolonged waiting, something endemic to such places. Thus, equipped with such lenses, the study made several findings summarised hereafter.

Young people’s narratives and experiences of Dzaleka, much like numerous settings, at first speak to a constricting and challenging environment that impedes one’s attempts at achieving certain goals and move forwards with their lives. A future orientated focus unsurprising given their generational stage, defined by them as one of “preparation” or “becoming”. Whilst issues of refugee status and government restrictions heighten the challenges of encampment, the outcome for young people in Dzaleka is echoed by many worldwide who are ever finding the stage of youth to be one of stuckness, an entrenched stage of ‘waithood’. Nonetheless, as was epistemologically assumed, these individuals are not passive to such constraints, but are actively and creatively navigating this environment. In a narrative which, unlike the first, was
not shared by elder people – perhaps due to their relatively shorter time in encampment – young people described Dzaleka as a place of learning in a broader sense of the term, a “teacher” or a “school” that has taught them how to “cope” or “survive” and get on with everyday life. A narrative that builds the strong emphasis young people place on the camp as a place of normality, a depiction intimately connected to their acceptance of “camp life” and a need for “patience”. An altogether unexpected finding given how this setting appears to an outsider as such an “extraordinarily unacceptable place” (Grayson, 2017, p.202).

Whilst this portrayal of Dzaleka as a place of contradiction, of both constraint and learning, supports ‘third way’ studies, it is young people’s depiction of the camp as a place of “waiting”, a “bridge”, and their enactment of waithood by “keeping busy”, that enables the thesis to expand existing studies. Each term implies a sense of temporality, of waiting – that the camp is not the final destination – but importantly, alludes to the different pathways this setting provides to keep busy and one day enable them to crossover this bridge. Building upon Jansen’s (2016) hypothesis of camps as a new form of settlement in a broader spectrum of mobility – and perhaps pointing to underlying but unspoken, additional motivations for arriving in Dzaleka – I demonstrated how young people also perceive the camp as a place which will one day enable them to escape their waithood and move forwards with their lives. Some – those arriving more recently and predominantly young Congolese who are presumed more likely to be chosen for resettlement – endure waiting with the almost unwavering belief in being chosen for resettlement; an opportunity to begin a new, “good life” in the West where they can finally complete their education, find stable employment, and start a family. However, others, those in Dzaleka longer, have understood the issues with waiting to leave to move forwards and are instead attempting to “make sense” or “live where they are”. Such individuals “taking steps” to move forwards in Dzaleka through the unique – and perhaps much improved compared to their countries of origin or host countries – pathway of formal learning that humanitarian organisations provide in camps. This latter group perhaps more closely lending weight to Jansen’s (2016) further hypothesis of camps as “nodal points” where people build their lives for unknown durations. Thus, whilst clouded by contradictions and tensions, youth perspectives potentially position the camp as a durable solution in and of itself. Before exploring the main themes running through such findings it is important to briefly comment on the rationality for presenting the ethnographic material in this aforementioned manner.

The goal of each analytical chapter was to explore a key narrative underlying young people’s stories of Dzaleka to demonstrate how youth perspectives can expand current depictions of encampment. Whilst not wanting to over-simplify complex lived realities, and aware that the ordering of my questions might have structured young people’s reflections, it appeared that such narratives unfolded in a particular order due to their temporal framing in these stories.
All young people expressed a dominant narrative of constraint from the outset. A view that aligns with their early thoughts of arriving in Dzaleka, a portrayal expected of such a setting, and perhaps one shaped by the listener’s perceived positionality. In many ways a response to this, a narrative of learning then emerged – all young people discussed how they had learnt to cope with various challenges – and a narrative perhaps able to emerge since the ‘shock’ of ‘camp life’ had passed, now ‘normal’, young people try to get on with their lives. Grounded in this normality, in young people’s daily routines and their enactment of waithood through the emic notion of ‘keeping busy’, a third narrative surfaced as one of waiting.

Shaped by the ‘temporality of patience’ and the extent to which different young people employed the narrative of constraint, unlike the first two portrayals, waiting was not given meaning to in the same way by all. Two chapters were therefore afforded to explore this multifaceted (active) waiting that had become their experience of Dzaleka. Chapter four more closely grounded in a narrative of constraint, the young people mentioned there portrayed their waiting as ‘stuckness’, unable to move forwards with their lives whilst remaining in Dzaleka, resettlement the only way out. Young people in Chapter 5 less prone to a discourse of constraint and – now able to see resettlement as a double-edged sword – instead they look to use their waiting as a period of ‘preparation’ and ‘becoming’ through the alternative pathways the camp provides. Young people’s stories – and perhaps their lives in Dzaleka – unfolding this way, it therefore made sense to structure the chapters in this order, each building upon those explored before, whilst contributing their own arguments to the overall discussion.

‘Youth’ and the ‘Camp’

From the outset, it became clear that the study’s two referents of interest, ‘youth’ and the ‘camp’, shared a number of both, conceptual and experienced similarities. These parallels formed the backbone of the thesis, the analytical chapters explored the intimate and dynamic relationship between them. Early on, we heard young people’s portrayal of their generational stage, how it should materialise, as a transitional or temporary period, one of preparation, the foundation of life, a stage of becoming. Comments later echoed by these individuals when discussing their early thoughts of Dzaleka, either growing up there or arriving more recently, thinking it too a temporary stage, hearing from friends or family already resettled and believing they also would be leaving soon. Youth and the camp positioned as times and spaces from which young people are waiting to leave, the notion of ‘waiting’ proposed for those in these contexts; both exile and youth a time of searching for a sense of self and belonging (Boer, 2015; Honwana, 2012).

However, we went on to hear how neither manifest themselves so, each instead experienced by young people as stuckness and prolonged. Chapter 2 revealed Dzaleka to be a place of
constraint, where young people face a number of daily limitations – not wholly unique to camps – preventing them from moving forwards with their lives. An inability for physical mobility, to leave Dzaleka, suggested to result in an inability for social inter-generational mobility, to transition into adulthood. Despite this, it remains that young people retain various degrees of hope for the future and Dzaleka, mirroring their epistemological construction of youth, is nevertheless a temporary “stage” or “bridge”. Although marred by uncertainty, the camp is not the final destination but a transitional place that will one day enable them to cross over into the good life. Findings confirming camps as places of contradiction (Grayson, 2017), of both constraint and opportunity, but importantly, drawing attention to one of the unique pathways refugee camps provide young people to escape their stuckness, this time of waithood.

**Waithood in Dzaleka**

Employing a lens of waithood to approach young people’s thoughts of Dzaleka at first seemed to support more traditional understandings of camps as places of confinement and restriction. Perceiving themselves with nothing to do, no choice and going blindly into the future, a view of these young people emerged as individuals facing ‘social death’ (Vigh, 2006), ‘stuck’ in ‘permanent ambiguity’ (Sommers, 2012). Whilst said notions apply to many worldwide – including, and perhaps even more so by young Malawians – issues of refugee status and government restrictions on movement and employment present further, context-specific, structural constraints. An initial glance would therefore position these young people along ‘deficient’ or ‘crisis’ approaches, “inactively lingering” in waithood (Honwana, 2014, p.30); affirming the, by now well understood, inappropriateness of camps as a response to displacement. However, this study showed that such issues do not define young people’s experience of encampment (Grayson, 2017) and as the thesis progressed, we began to see a more ‘productive’ or ‘dynamic’ waithood unfold through a narrative of learning employed by these young people.

As a response to their narrative of constraint, in young people’s stories of Dzaleka they suggest they are not ‘inactively lingering’, but actively navigate these aforementioned challenges and learn to “survive” or “cope”. Speaking to notions of agency and resilience, Dzaleka is also portrayed as a place of learning in a broader sense of the term. Through their involvement with NGOs operating in the camp and their complex relationships with people and place, young people imply they are gaining experiences, behaviour, and skills necessary to deal with their present and future lives. These individuals perhaps more open to such channels of learning and with greater access to them, elder people predominantly only speaking of the “prison” that has made no “positive contribution” to their personal development; young people argued in Chapter 3 to actually have *greater* equity in camps, differentiating these places from
other settings of waithood. Whilst emic terms of “surviving” or “coping” speak to enactments of waithood identified elsewhere – young people navigating contexts of constraints by “straining” (Finn & Oldfield, 2015) or “hustling” (Thieme, 2018) – an interesting phrase employed by many of those in Dzaleka is the idea of “keeping busy” and one I argued to be a productive frame for understanding how young people in refugee camps enact their waithood.

Various coping mechanisms were mentioned; from piecework, volunteering and attending Mapokezi, to more illicit methods and misleading the humanitarian management of the camp. Yet, “keeping busy” is an umbrella term and praxis, frequently used by young people to incorporate many of these, whilst taking on a meaning of its own. At first, it is clear it alludes to another way young people have learnt to cope with place, with the constraints they confront in Dzaleka, and a response to having “nothing to do” and “no choice”. The practice, essential for coping ‘mentally’, enables one to avoid thinking of the past and present, to avoid getting caught up in conflicts or involving themselves in harmful activities. However, interesting is how the term also speaks to young people’s need for coping with time and thus, their broader portrayal of the camp as a place of waiting. It is the temporality implied through such a phrase which, unlike other studies of waithood, reveal its resonance for a setting of encampment, a place of multifaceted and prolonged waiting for young people. Thus, it is employed by these individuals to guide the listener to their thoughts of Dzaleka as both a place of constraint and one of waiting, where keeping busy is something all must do daily to navigate a context that hinders and constrains, but at the same time offers a potential way out at the end of the bridge and escape waithood.

Expressing Agency

Many of the discussions in this thesis have been guided by Giddens’s ‘duality’ approach to the relationships between agents and the forces structuring their lives; each closely interconnected instead of “two independently given sets of phenomena” (1984, p.25). Individuals reproduce a social system through their (re)production of social actions – drawing on the structure, “rules and resources”, of that social system – Giddens (1984) contends that, whilst such structures constrain individuals, they cannot exist without them and can thus, also be enabling through the various mediums they provide. Employing the relational approach Giddens’s implies, I attempted to instrumentalise his ideas through notions of ‘thick’ and ‘thin’ agency (Klocker, 2007), exploring what ‘thickens’ or ‘thins’ young people’s capacities to act in Dzaleka. Doing so led to the idea of camps as places that both constrain and enable (perhaps more than many settings) young people’s abilities to deploy a range of ‘causal powers’.

Early on we heard a number of factors portrayed by young people – but no doubt felt across generations – as limiting their choices in Dzaleka. These included camp specific constraints
such as the absence of refugee status and the government’s reservations to the 1951 Refugee
Convention. But also, several broader factors including, gender, ethnicity, nationality and living
without family in the camp. However, in the second analytical chapter young people presented
another, perhaps more context-specific, picture of Dzaleka as a place where their agency is
at the same time, also being enabled. They explained how they are also learning to “cope”
through, their participation in NGO projects and short courses, their interactions with a diverse
community of different cultures, behaviours, and mindsets, and their relationships with the
constraints they are forced to confront on a daily basis. Yet, it is clear that learning to “survive”
or “deal” with such challenges, and the coping mechanisms young people spoke of, are
nonetheless expressions of ‘thin’ agency, young people still stuck, lacking a range of
alternative options. Sentiments entrenched when comparing oneself to those outside Dzaleka;
seeing young Malawians able to drive, hearing from friends resettled abroad and watching
series or films showing life in the West.

Yet, when compared to elder people it appeared that such expressions of agency, whilst
limited, position young people with much greater capacity for action in Dzaleka. Perhaps more
‘open’ to these sources of learning, and with better access to the humanitarian set-up of the
camp, able to speak the language – both structural and linguistical – of the camp (Turner,
2006), through this learning, young people are potentially expressing ‘thicker’ agency than
those around them. Alluding to Turner’s (2006) ‘liminal experts’ or Vigh’s (2009, p.97) idea of
‘skilled navigators’, the latter referring to “motion within motion”, of being able to direct “one’s
life through an uncertain social environment, towards better possible futures and improved life
chances”. A finding seeming to counter Honwana’s (2014) premise that waithood is essentially
about a lack of equity, for in this setting, whilst such a portrayal should not be romanticised –
young people still “stuck” – we find age is perhaps a ‘thickener’ of agency.

Moreover, looking to the future, it is interesting to see how the camp thickens young people’s
agency through the pathways it provides them to move forwards with their lives. In this sense,
another way young people express agency is through the hope they
maintain for the future. As Horst and Grabska (2015) note, “Coming to terms with uncertainty, then, is often […] about coping through hope, waiting, negotiating, and navigating”, Brun (2015, p.24) remarks, for
displaced peoples, that even during the uncertainty and not being in control of their futures,
people do “anticipate the possibility of alternative futures”. Paraphrasing the latter, I suggest,
“keeping busy” “implies anticipation and some confidence in the fact that a certain event will
occur”, the emic praxis employed by young people to orientate themselves towards their
hoped-for futures. Futures that for some will materialise through formal learning opportunities,
but for many, means resettlement. Thus, whilst constraining young people in many aspects of
day-to-day life, looking to the future, something of much importance for those in this
generational stage, the camp enables young people to carry on and cope through the hope it instils. Yet, as Thalia’s story infers, the relationship between maintaining hope and expressing agency is not so straightforward. For, hope in one day being resettled is a double-edged sword, at the same time constraining one’s capacities, or perhaps one’s will to act in the present, waiting to move forwards with their life once they have left the camp instead.

**Waiting in Dzaleka**

As a stage of ‘protracted liminality’ (Thieme, 2019), the notion of waithood describes the period of life in which these young people find themselves, needing to begin taking on roles and responsibilities they prescribe to social adulthood, but unable to do so and experiencing stuckness instead. The emic praxis of keeping busy argued to be how young people in Dzaleka enact their waithood, a term aligned with others that allude to young people coping with place, but nuanced to a setting of encampment through the temporality it implies, these individuals also needing to cope with humanitarian, camp time. The phrase inextricably linked to anticipation of a hoped-for event. For, whilst waithood speaks to young people waiting for generational mobility, waiting is multifaceted for young, displaced people who are also waiting for a return to ‘normality’, to go home, or be chosen for resettlement. However, as would be expected from any heterogenous group of individuals, the study found that not all young people enact waithood, “keep busy” and thus, give meaning to this multifaceted waiting in the same way. Whilst all are waiting to leave and become, such trajectories do not go hand in hand for all.

Chapter 4 explored the stories of one group of young people, predominantly those arriving more recently, corresponding to young Congolese people, but also young Rwandans and Burundians who arrived with their families many years ago. These individuals, the prior presumed to have higher chances of being chosen for resettlement and the latter perhaps more able to wait as a result of having family in the camp to rely on, experience waiting as stuckness. Continuing with the physical mobility that brought them to Dzaleka, they contend further movement is required before they can achieve social inter-generational mobility. Revealing the camp to be a stepping point, a “bridge”, along their journey into social adulthood, young people speak of needing to endure this waiting, accept the challenges of living in the camp and be patient until it is their turn to leave through resettlement. A finding that would seem to counter Honwana’s (2012) idea that young people in waithood are not simply ‘getting by’ and waiting for a solution to come, the camp a highly structured context of waiting and one providing a somewhat unique opportunity to escape waithood that many are waiting for.

Yet, for others who find themselves living alone in the camp or who have lived there long enough to have understood this unlikely opportunity for the “double-edged sword” (Brun, 2015)
it is, we found a further experience of waiting unfold. Forced by the necessity of their situations, but also pushed by a certain mindset that tells them to “live where they are”, these young people understand that if they ‘just’ endure waiting until the day their name appears on the UNHCR notice board, they may remain stuck the rest of their lives. Whilst it is unclear what came first, it is evident that their participation in higher education opportunities in Dzaleka play a role in shaping such a portrayal of waiting. Perhaps buying into the humanitarian lingo of education as ‘key to life’, these young people see the short courses and online university degrees – potentially unavailable back home – as a way to ‘get out’ of waisthood; “build” themselves, develop their CVs, and lay the foundations for taking on roles and responsibilities they associate with adulthood. Whilst this pathway is ultimately troublesome for its inability to procure well-paid and stable work that young people expect, it, much like resettlement, does keep hope alive and in this sense, like the previous group, produces a more meaningful experience of waiting.

A lens of waiting – of which waisthood is arguably a part – revealing the camp not as a place where young people create their own ‘youthscapes’ (Maira & Soep, 2005), independent spaces outside of hegemonic control, as Honwana (2012, p.85) describes young people in waisthood. But instead, positions the camp as a place whose existing structures young people can use to assist them to circumnavigate their stuckness – perhaps present before they left home – and move forwards with their lives.

**Thoughts for policy**

Clearly then, this study adds to existing literature that questions the suitable of camps as a response to displacement and the effectiveness of the UNHCR’s ‘durable solutions’ for those living in these spaces. Voluntary repatriation and local integration are increasingly unachievable around the world with conflicts ever-protracting and hostility towards foreigners deepening with the onset of economic instabilities and the resulting scapegoating of the ‘other’. Yet, it is the complexity of third-country resettlement that this study touched on. Whilst essential for many who have nowhere left to go and continue to face considerable insecurities in camps, it is evident that for the young people in this study its meaning is multifaceted. Whether a pull-factor to the camp or learning about it on arrival, for many it is something that puts everything else on hold, entrenching one’s already perceived stuckness and providing a way out only for an incredibly small minority. Whilst the hope it generates is invaluable given a context where this is hard found, sensitisation campaigns in camps would therefore do well to understand the impacts resettlement has on young people at this stage of life; where social and personal pressures are mounting for them to move forwards with their lives. Yet, for some young people, the camp means more than resettlement alone and a drive is instilled to pursue
the Western and humanitarian notion of progressing with one’s education, young people see this as an alternative pathway the camp provides for escaping their stuckness. However, it appears that such courses exist only to induce participation in further courses, as young people attempt to gather as many certificates as they can but are unable to put this learning into practice. To prevent more young people from losing hope in this pathway, it is essential that the restrictions governments place on camps are relaxed so these individuals can more easily and safely join those already (illicitly) making important contributions to the social, cultural, and economic life of their host communities. For, the camp is a place of learning and one where young people’s agency is being enabled, but to make the most of this and realise the transition they desire, there must be more destinations made available on the other side of this ‘bridge’ than resettlement alone.

Concluding remarks

Coming to the end of our final walk around Dzaleka and stopping to rest under the shade of some trees he and his friends had planted as part of Plan’s reforestation project some years ago, William shared how he had enjoyed being involved in the study and how it had helped him to think about himself and some things he had not considered before. Thanking him for his remark, I explained some of my early doubts of conducting this type of research. The first concerned the impact of the study, and my fear that it would be of more benefit to me, in gaining a PhD and to my academic career, than for those with whom I had spoken; aware of the limitations of research at this level in its capacity to make changes to existing policy and practice. Whilst a number of steps were taken to alleviate such concerns, including being open and honest with participants, asking for continuous feedback and providing recommendations on its completion, this fear remains.

The second issue, connected to the prior, mirrors Grayson’s (2017) conclusion from her ethnography of young Somalians in Kakuma refugee camp, in that the product of this research can only ever be a partial and imperfect translation of people’s lived experiences. A result of linguistic and social barriers – and temporal limitations – myself an outsider, unable to fully capture or understand the entirety of this setting, only gaining a fleeting glance into ‘camp life’ through my brief observations and young people’s narratives, the latter undoubtedly shaped to their listener. Whilst aware that an outsider can provide a useful, objective view, less influenced by contextual – structural and social – forces, I suggested to William that a local researcher might have been more appropriate. Hearing this, he replied, “maybe that is what they did with us in WUSC, because when we read the findings on that final day you came to, it was like hearing about my own life”; referring to a WUSC-run short research project he and some peers had conducted earlier in the year.
The findings made in this thesis do speak to broader trends in camp and youth studies literature, whilst at the same time providing new avenues for further exploration, such as the multifaceted nature of young people’s waiting in this setting and a somewhat unique enactment of waithood. As such, I hope that, on reading this, William and the other young people who used some of their time in waiting to take part in this study have similar reflections and that I have provided as accurate portrayal of their lives as I could.

Figure 32: Trees planted by young people during JRS’s camp reforestation project
Bibliography


McKenzie, D. (2017). Poverty, inequality, and international migration: Insights from 10 years of migration and 


Appendix I: Interview Guides for SSIs in Phase 1

Before all interviews, I introduced myself and explained the purpose of the research, reminding the participant they did not have to respond if they did not want to, they could stop the discussion as and when they pleased and that it was confidential and could be anonymised if they desired.

*Implementing Partners (NGOs)*

- Tell me a bit about the work your organisation performs in the camp.
- What are the successes/challenges you have had?
- Can you tell me a bit about young people in the camp?
- To what extent are your projects aimed at young people?
- How would you describe young people’s relationships with NGOs and their projects in the camp?
- Why do young people volunteer for NGOs?
- What are the main challenges young people face in the camp?
- What are you doing in terms of advocacy for the implementation of the Comprehensive Refugee Response Framework (CRRF)?
- Is there anything else you would like to tell me about young people in Dzaleka?
- What is the relationship like between NGOs and CBOs in the camp?
- Do you have any comments or questions for me?

*Refugee-led Community Based Organisations (CBOs)*

- Tell me a bit about yourself. When and why did you start this CBO? What is the main goal?
- What are the successes/challenges you have had?
- Can you tell me a bit about young people in the camp?
- To what extent are your projects aimed at young people?
- How would you describe young people’s relationships with CBOs and their projects in the camp?
- Why do young people volunteer for CBOs?
- What are the main challenges young people face in the camp?
- Is there anything else you would like to tell me about young people in Dzaleka?
- What is the relationship like between CBOs and the implementing partners?
- Do you have any comments or questions for me?
Community Leaders

For community leaders, after doing the normal introduction outlined above, I would explain how I had obtained permission from the MHS and that now I would like their permission to conduct research in the camp and speak to people from their communities.

- Do you have any advice for me doing research in Dzaleka?
- Do you have any advice for me speaking with young people in particularly in the camp?
- Can you tell me a bit about why people from your country are in Dzaleka?
- How long have they been here?
- Why did they travel so far to arrive in Malawi, rather than a closer refugee receiving country?
- Has life in Dzaleka changed over the years? If so, how?
- What are the challenges/opportunities for people in the camp?
- Can you tell me a bit about raising children in the camp?
- Can you tell me a bit about the young people in Dzaleka?
- What are the challenges/opportunities specific to young people?
- Do you have any comments or questions for me?

UNHCR (questions and responses sent through email)

- Can you tell me about the arrival process of asylum seekers into Malawi? Which government body manages this and what is the role of the UNHCR in this process?
- What are the official rules on:
  - Movement to and from the camp?
  - Allocating plots in the camp?
  - Employment?
  - ‘Motivational stipends’ for volunteers?
- What are the current steps being taken to expand Dzaleka to deal with the overcrowding?
- What is the relationship like between the camp and the surrounding host-community?
- What are the refugee-led governance structures existing inside the camp?
- What is the role of UNHCR in terms of advocating for the implementation of the CRRF?
- What is the role of young people in the camp?
Appendix II: Guides and Prompts for each method in Phase 2

Before all of the methods employed in phase 2, regardless of how much the participant already knew about me and the research and regardless of whether we had already done one of the other activities, I would introduce myself, explain why I was in the camp, explain the research, its purpose and what it may and may not achieve. I explained the phases of the research and the different methods which they could choose if they preferred. I would go over the ethical steps, reminding the participant that their participation was voluntary, they didn’t have to answer a question if they did not want and that they could stop the activity at any stage they desired. I assured the participant that what they told me was confidential and that it would be anonymised with any identifying information being removed. Despite many stating they did not think that would be necessary, as it became apparent, I would have to anonymise several participants due to the information they shared with me. I therefore felt that all participants would have to be anonymised. If the audio needed to be recorded, I would ask permission to record and explain once it had been transcribed the recording would be deleted. This would then lead into one of the following data-gathering tools:

*Walk and Talk*

- The structure of the walk and talk was greatly influenced by Clark and Emmel’s (2010) ‘toolkit’ for such interviews. The advice and process it suggests, especially regarding ‘clear’ but ‘open’ instructions for participants, was closely followed, shaped to the context of the camp, and is of great use to future researchers employing this method.

*Draw the Walk*

- Can you think back to the walk we did together and now draw the route we took, including things we talked about along the way and anything else that comes to mind. Annotate it with any labels you think are necessary to help someone to understand what you have drawn. There is no correct or incorrect way to do this, draw it however you feel. You can take as much time as you need.

- (Once completed) Now can you talk me through your drawing, explaining the things you have included?

*Map-Making*

- I would like you to imagine you are a bird flying over Dzaleka. Please draw what you would see, including anything you think is interesting or important. Annotate it with any labels you think are necessary to help someone to
understand what you have drawn. There is no correct or incorrect way to do this, draw it however you feel. You can take as much time as you need.

- (Once completed) Now can you talk me through your drawing, explaining the things you have included?

**Semi-Structured Interview**

The wording and ordering of these questions varied, depending on what I already knew about the participant whilst taking into account the perceived comfort level of the participant.

**Introduction questions:**

- Tell me a bit about yourself (prompts below)
  - Nationality?
  - Age?
  - Living with who? Mapokezi status?
  - Refugee status?
  - Source of income in the camp?
  - Time been in the camp?
  - Before the camp?
  - From town or village?
  - Can you talk me through a typical day for you in Dzaleka?

**Questions on Youth:**

- So, the research is about youth and young people, what does youth mean to you? Who is a young person?
- When does youth start? Finish?
- Do you consider yourself a youth?
  - If yes, do you enjoy being so?
  - If no, why not?

**Questions on the camp:**

- When you arrived in the camp, what were your first thoughts?
- What do you think now?
- How do you get on with other people in the camp? Other young people?
- What is your favourite thing to do in the camp? Favourite place? Least favourite place?
- What do you do in your free time?
o Do you use the services of CBOs/NGOs in the camp? Opinions of these?
o Do you ever leave the camp? Why? How often?
o Do you move around at night? Why/why not?
o Why did you come to Dzaleka specifically and not another camp closer to your country?
o Are there any things that you find particularly challenging in the camp? How do you deal with these challenges?
o Where do you want to be and what do you want to be doing in 5 years’ time? What are you doing now to achieve this?

Final questions:

o Is there anything else important you think I should know about young people in the camp or anything else you would like to talk about?
o Do you have any advice for me doing research in Dzaleka into the lives of young people?
o I have asked you lots of questions about your life, do you have any questions or comments for me?

- Disclosure: If a participant was to disclose information, i.e. something that was harmful to their, or others, health, or participation in illegal activities, I would have discussed this with my interpreter (a member of a Psychosocial health department) and sought his advice on how to proceed.
Appendix III: Interview Guides for SSI in Phase 3

Young people in Dzaleka SSI#2

- What have you been up to since the last time we spoke?
- Before you left your country of origin, what did you know about Malawi and Dzaleka?
  - If nothing, when did you learn about Dzaleka?
- What are your thoughts of Malawi now? Thoughts of living in Malawi in the future?
- When you arrived in the camp, did you think you would be here for a short time or a long time? What do you think now?
- If you have been in another camp, can you compare Dzaleka with that camp?
- What are your thoughts of returning to your country of origin?
- Many young people talked about the importance of resettlement, what are your thoughts on this? If there was no possibility for resettlement, would this make a difference to your life? Would you do anything differently in the camp?
- In our last discussion you said you did/didn’t have refugee status, what impact, if any, does this have upon your life in the camp?
- In our last discussion you spoke about the challenges you and other young people confront in the camp. Are there any opportunities in the camp to help you deal with these? Are they effective?
- Many young people spoke about the importance of being busy in Dzaleka. Do you agree? Why is this important?
- What impact, if any, has the camp had on you these past … years? Have you changed who you are?

Elder People in Dzaleka

Introduction questions:

- Tell me a bit about yourself (prompts below)
  - Nationality?
  - Age?
  - Living with who? Mapokezi status?
  - Refugee status? Impact of this on your life? (and your family’s?)
  - Source of income in the camp?
• Time been in the camp?
• Before the camp?
• From town or village?
• Can you talk me through a typical day for you in Dzaleka?

Questions on the camp:

o Before you left your country of origin, what did you know about Malawi and Dzaleka? If nothing, when did you learn about Dzaleka?

o When you arrived in the camp, what were your first thoughts? Did you think you would be here for a short time or a long time?

o What do you think now?

o How do you get on with other people in the camp? With young people?

o What is your favourite thing to do in the camp? Favourite place? Least favourite place?

o What do you do in your free time?

o Do you use the services of CBOs/NGOs in the camp? Opinions of these?

o Do you ever leave the camp? Why? How often?

o Do you move around at night? Why/why not?

o Why did you come to Dzaleka specifically and not another camp closer to your country?

o If you have been in another camp, can you compare Dzaleka with that camp?

o Are there any things that you find particularly challenging in the camp? How do you deal with these challenges?

o Are there any opportunities in the camp to help you deal with these? Are they effective?

o What impact, if any, has the camp had on you these past … years? Have you changed who you are?

o What are your thoughts of returning to your country of origin?

o Where do you want to be and what do you want to be doing in 5 years’ time? What are you doing now to achieve this?

Questions on Youth:

o So, the research is about young people, what does youth mean to you? Who is a young person?

o When does youth start? Finish?
What are your thoughts on young people in Dzaleka?

Can you tell me a bit about raising children in the camp?

How do elder generations and younger generations get on in the camp?

Final questions:

Is there anything else important you think I should know about young people in the camp or anything else you would like to talk about?

Do you have any advice for me doing research in Dzaleka into the lives of young people?

I have asked you lots of questions about your life, do you have any questions or comments for me?

Young Malawians

Introduction questions:

Tell me a bit about yourself (prompts below)

• Age?
• Where from in Malawi? Town or village?
• Living with who? Family? Married? Children?
• Years living where you are now? Before here?
• Source of income?
• Can you talk me through a typical day for you?

Questions on Youth:

So, the research is about young people, what does youth mean to you? Who is a young person?

When does youth start? Finish?

Do you consider yourself a youth?

• If yes, do you enjoy being so?
• If no, why not?

Can you tell me a bit about young people in Malawi?

Can you tell me a bit about the relationship between young people and their parents?
General questions:

- Where do you want to be and what do you want to be doing in 5 years’ time? What are you doing now to achieve this?
- Have you heard of Dzaleka refugee camp? What do you know about it and the people living there?
- Have you heard about the discrimination recently against these people? Thoughts on this?
- Is there anything else important you think I should know about young people in Malawi or anything else you would like to talk about?
- I have asked you lots of questions about your life, do you have any questions or comments for me?
Appendix IV: Young people's drawings of Dzaleka

Francis, Rwandan, 25 years old
Francine, Burundian, 28 years old
Fabrice, Congolese, 20 years old
Fabien, Congolese, 23 years old
Josef, Congolese, 24 years old