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At a Distance? An Introduction

On 23 November 1999, I met Axmed¹ in Dagahaley camp during a second interview with his uncle, Roble Abdiraxman.² I had been in Dadaab for almost four months by then, and Dagahaley was the second camp in which I stayed. Early in November, I had gone to each section of the camp to introduce myself and explain the purpose of my presence in the area. When I reached block C6, Roble was amongst the people I met. He was very outspoken and wanted to know where I was from, telling me that he would soon go for resettlement to the U.S.A., where his daughter lived. I asked him whether I could come back to ask some questions about that, and he agreed. We had a first interview and I made sure that Roble received a copy of my written report of that interview. A couple of days later, while I was walking through the camp with my translator, Roble stopped us and invited me to visit his house any time in order to discuss the report I had given him and answer my additional questions. When we did, he welcomed us with juice and later with tea and cake, proudly telling me that the cake was made using eggs from his own chicken. While initially the atmosphere was a bit formal, this changed when I was introduced to Axmed, a young boy of maybe thirteen years. Axmed had just come from Mogadishu ten days earlier, travelling alone. He had wanted to go to another uncle in Afmadow, but once there, he learned that his uncle had moved to Nairobi. Thus, he continued on to Dadaab, where he knew his uncle Roble lived.

When Axmed found out that I was from the Netherlands, he enthusiastically started to mention some of the Dutch soccer players he admired and we talked about soccer for a while. Then, the boy related his experiences with the sport in Mogadishu. He told me about a man who was coaching a rival soccer team in the city and had tried to encourage peace through sports activities for young people. Axmed was sad when he recounted: 'He was Hawiye³, but he was a very good man. He brought us

over fifty balls so that we could play football together, and he also paid for the tickets of those who wanted to watch football games in the stadium in Mogadishu. He tried to promote peace through sports but one day the warlords just killed him'. Roble then prompted Axmed to tell me why he had left Somalia and I learned that after a soccer match, he had been threatened with a knife and a gun by one of the players. Roble told me that although the assailant was from a related clan and the fight was only about a soccer match, Axmed's relatives in Somalia had considered it best for the boy to leave Mogadishu and stay with his uncle instead. Listening to Axmed's experiences, I was silenced by the deafening clash between the universality of young boys enthusiastic about their soccer idols and the unique absurdness of this particular boy's memories of the game. At that moment, all I could do was talk about Ruud Gullit and Edgar Davids, as if he was just a boy like my brother once was, crazy about soccer.

Throughout my encounters with refugees, whether during work and research in Europe or in Kenya, what I have always found most striking is the duality of humanness and inhumanity in refugee lives. How the most shocking events become part of ordinary human lives is something I am constantly trying to grapple with. I find it difficult to deal with the contrast of, on the one hand, recognising the human aspect of refugees' experiences, while on the other, never being able to understand the dreadful cruelty of parts of their lives. As such, my research project developed from a wish to provide an alternative to common depictions of refugees, both in the media and in academic literature. As I will argue later in this chapter, refugees are often labelled either as 'vulnerable victims' or as 'cunning crooks', a process that strips them of all humanity. Yet the individuals I got to know, during my work for the Dutch Refugee Council and through various research projects, were human beings trying to deal with the 'inhuman' aspects of their past and present experiences. In an attempt to show this continuity and the agency of refugees, I decided to analyse the social security strategies of a particular refugee community and the links between these strategies and the ones utilised in their (pre-flight) past.

Because of earlier research experience, I chose to conduct research amongst Somalis in the Kenyan refugee camps of Dadaab. My main interest concerned the effects of life in Dadaab on the social security arrangements of Somali refugees, and the level of security or insecurity that NGO and government arrangements provided. Before their flight, the Somali were very familiar with insecurities, which they dealt with through what I will call a 'nomadic heritage'. I define this heritage as consisting of three elements: a mentality of looking for greener pastures; a strong social network that entails the obligation to assist each other in surviving; and risk-reduction through strategically dispersing investments in family members and activities. My main interest was to find out whether refugee life in the Dadaab camps affected such strategies. Between July

1999 and August 2001, I spent various periods of fieldwork amongst the Somali refugees who live in the refugee camps near Dadaab in northeast Kenya, adding up to over one year. During my stay in the camps, I learned that while the three 'nomadic' characteristics had developed from the local circumstances of life in Somalia, they had now acquired a transnational character and were still supporting the Somali refugees in Dadaab in their daily survival.

This book is structured along the historical and transnational lines of my interest in the social security strategies of Somali refugees in Dadaab. Chapters 2 and 3 present the historical background to the ways that Somalis can deal with insecurities in the camps, looking both at the situation in Somalia before and during the war as well as at the history of the refugee regime mandated to provide security to refugees. Then, chapters 4 and 5 analyse the transnational aspects of the refugees' strategies, presenting the ways in which Somalis assist each other across borders as well as the consequent dreams and opportunities of migration from Dadaab. This first chapter will provide insight into the process that led to this historical and transnational focus, presenting the case of Khaliif as an introduction to some of the main points in this book. I describe common refugee labelling processes and suggest an alternative approach that acknowledges both refugee agency and vulnerabilities. Subsequently, I introduce the research setting in Dadaab and the position of Somali refugees in Kenya. In conclusion, the methodological and theoretical basis of research and book will be discussed.

Khaliif: Migration and Choice

During my stay in Dagahaley my Somali teacher Yunis Axmed, who was not only an excellent language teacher but also a great help to the research, introduced me to Khaliif⁴ Ibrahim. Yunis had taken it upon himself to introduce me to some of the respected elders and leaders in the camp, and Khaliif was one of them. We paid a visit to his block at the far end of Dagahaley on a Friday, but discovered he was out rounding up his cattle from the bushes next to the camp (Fig. 1.1). One of his sons rushed to tell his father about our visit and we waited for Khaliif to come home. Although we were served tea and welcomed warmly, Khaliif insisted that he had not been expecting us that day and we needed to come back so that his wife could prepare something for us. We agreed to come for lunch on Sunday, and arranged to have an interview afterwards. Although the story that Khaliif told us on that Sunday, 21 November 1999, is not typical in many ways, it serves as a clear introduction of what this book is about. Khaliif has far more opportunities than most refugees in Dadaab due to his socio-economic position, but the way he weighs his options and



Figure 1.1 *Rainy season in Dagahaley.*

makes his choices is exemplary for the decision-making processes related to migration. Besides, Khaliif's situation illustrates the many advantages that 'transnational nomadism' has brought for Somalis in Dadaab. He functions within an extensive transnational network of relatives, which has enabled him to live in Dagahaley in relative prosperity, while also allowing him to migrate from the camps.

When I asked Khaliif to tell me more about his personal background, he started his story by talking about his childhood. He was born in a rural area in Galgaduud near the Ethiopian border where he was brought up in a family of wealthy pastoralists who owned goats, cattle and camels. Khaliif belongs to the *reer* (family, lineage)⁵ of former president Siyaad Barre. His grandfather was a respected elder and peacekeeper in the area and when he died, Khaliif's father fulfilled that role. Again, when his father died, his *adeer* (father's brother) took over. Khaliif went to *dugsi* (Koran school) in Galgaduud and, at the age of seventeen, he moved to Mogadishu and joined the armed forces there. At that time, he learned Italian and some English. He was promoted to the rank of colonel and was sent to the USSR and Italy for further military training. Khaliif believes that due to this experience abroad, he is able to evaluate the situation of his family in the camp and compare it to life in resettlement countries in the West; something we discussed extensively that afternoon.

Khaliif is the father of thirteen children, of whom one has died. Ten of his children live with him and his wife, Canab,⁶ in Dagahaley, while one of his sons goes to secondary school in Nairobi and another boy lives in

the U.S.A. with his mother, whom Khaliif divorced. When I asked about the two boys who do not live in the camps, I realised that Khaliif was not really pleased with the fact that they were out of his reach. He told me,

Both boys have not stayed with me since 1996, but every now and then I travel to Nairobi to visit my son there. He has really changed a lot since he moved from the camps; in terms of how he speaks, the way he dresses and even his hairstyle. He has become like a Black American now, copied from other boys in Nairobi. When I tried to say something about it, the boy told me: 'Hey dad, I'm free'. His behaviour has made me fear very much for the other children and that is why I cannot take them to the U.S.A. The religion tells us always to go straight, but in the U.S.A. children will learn to make detours.

I asked Khaliif whether he had agreed with the fact that his other son went to the U.S.A. to stay with his mother and he answered that he had not wanted him to go. Yet, the boy's mother insisted because he was her only son and she needed his assistance there. When she went so far as to send her relatives to Dagahaley in order to discuss the issue with Khaliif, he had to let his son go.

Then, Khaliif told me that he was called to Nairobi and offered a sponsorship⁷ only four months earlier but that he did not want to opt for resettlement:

My brothers and sisters pleaded with me to come to the U.S.A. and said that they would provide a sponsorship for my whole family. They told me that there is no reason for me to get killed in these refugee camps, arguing that the children would have nothing if I were to die because I am the only breadwinner in the family. However, it is better to die than to lose my children, my culture and my religion. The camps provide free food, education and medical treatment, clean drinking water, ninety-nine percent security and a piece of land on which we can build our houses without paying rent. There is plenty of grazing land available for the animals I own, so my condition is okay. There are people who take their children back to Somalia although there is still no education and no security and no let-up in the fighting. They are really crazy: what are they looking for? I have a piece of land near Mogadishu close to the river, which I could reclaim when I go back, since I have a letter of ownership for it. But at the moment, there is nothing for us to go back to unless peace is restored. My oldest children are now pupils in standard seven and eight, and for the next two or three years they will be going to Dagahaley secondary school. After that, peace should be restored in Somalia and they can finish their education there and find jobs in foreign embassies.

According to Khaliif, the prospect of opting for resettlement would interfere with these plans.

My children are my most important possession. If I went to the U.S.A., it would be like saying: 'take my children and make them into whatever you want'. The conditions in Dagahaley are good, so why should I risk my future just because of a few years of suffering? If I were to go to the U.S.A., I would have nothing and be nobody, nor would I be able to return to my country. My children would refuse to go back to Somalia and I would be like an old camel, leaving behind all its products. If I returned to Somalia on my own, people would ask me where my children were and why I had left them in the U.S.A. And then they would want to know why I had taken them to the U.S.A. in the first place.

When I asked Khaliif whether other people would agree with his point of view, he told me: 'People are not the same. Some people come from towns, some from rural areas. Some have lived off agriculture and others have moved with their cattle'. My question referred to the widespread existence of *buufis* in the camps, the dream to go for resettlement. Thus, my next question to Khaliif was whether he could explain why some refugees wanted to go to the West, unlike him. Khaliif answered:

First of all, the refugees want to escape the insecurity and the economic problems that they are facing in the camps. Secondly, they assume that they will achieve economic prosperity in the West. There is a clear lack of knowledge about the reality of life there, as the Somali do not realise that people in Western countries work hard for their money. But once people have resettled, they cannot go back because they do not have the money to return and besides, their children would not come with them. As a consequence they are stranded.

Despite his negative attitude towards life in the West, many of Khaliif's relatives live in Western countries and a number of them even enable him to live a comfortable life in Dagahaley. Khaliif has one brother and one sister who live in the U.S.A. and another brother in Denmark. He has received remittances from them on a number of occasions, but only in response to his requests. Khaliif does not like to call his siblings for financial help, since he knows that they have many relatives in Somalia who ask for their assistance. Besides, his siblings have their own family responsibilities, with small children to raise. When I asked him whether he received remittances from others, Khaliif said: 'My son in the U.S.A. is only eighteen and works part-time besides going to school, so it is not possible for him to send any money. At times, my ex-wife sends me some money when she is able. In addition to these occasional remittances, I get a monthly allowance from a group of fifteen of my relatives in Ohio who are in a position to assist me. They are *ilmo* (children) *adeer*, who are usually even more dedicated to assisting than one's own brothers and sisters'. Khaliif supports his large family through these regular remittances from outside the camps, but also has his own sources of income and assets. He owns three camels, six cows and fifteen goats as well as thirty chickens

that he keeps for their eggs and for special guests to eat. This enables him to show me in practical terms what Somali traditions of hospitality entail and I am impressed by the wonderful meal of soor (a grain dish) and chicken that his wife has cooked for us. As always, I eat it with the mixed emotions of not wanting to be a burden on the refugees' often tight subsistence, but realizing how important it is for Somalis to still be able to provide hospitality. This is a source of dignity and pride that I would hate to insult by declining the offer.

This brief description of my conversation with Khaliif and his deliberate choice to stay in Dagaaley addresses the main issues relevant to this book. Firstly, it is important to take into account Khaliif's position within the Somali community. He stems from a family of leaders and belongs to the clan of Siyad Barre, the former president of Somalia. He does not go into detail, but Khaliif seems to have occupied an important position in the government before his flight. Currently, although he lives in the semi-desert surroundings of a refugee camp, he can still be considered a wealthy and respected man. His socio-economic position obviously influences the choices that Khaliif is able to make in his life, and it is clear that most refugees do not have the same level of choice. Yet, as I realised from the feedback I acquired on a preliminary version of this chapter, the situation may be rather complex as Khaliif's socio-economic position simultaneously expands as well as restricts his options. Madimba Muse, a Somali who now lives in the U.K. and who sent me valuable comments on all preliminary chapters I sent him, was of the opinion that Khaliif would have been willing to live in Western countries just like he did before, as long as the circumstances were the same.⁹ He was unwilling to go purely because he had lost his status of government officer and had to replace it with that of refugee. Indeed, various studies, for example those dealing with the gender aspects of refugee issues, have pointed out how the experience of becoming a refugee at times is more difficult for those who had a higher socio-economic position in their country of origin (see e.g. McSpadden and Moussa 1993; Schrijvers 1997). Besides, Khaliif's current position is complicated by his links with the former government, as a number of Somali readers pointed out.

Listening to other Somalis explain how they were surviving in Dadaab, I realised that the level of power and choice of individual refugees may vary widely and thus needs to be studied and not assumed. A second point of relevance to this book is that Khaliif's story is punctuated with elements of travel and migration. In Somalia, travel is considered to be a learning process and a source of wisdom. 'A man who has travelled, a *wayo' arag*, is one who knows a great deal, has seen things, has lived' (Rousseau et al. 1998: 386). Khaliif came from a family of nomads and left for Mogadishu at the age of seventeen. From there, he ended up in the USSR and Italy. In addition, his family members currently live on a num-

ber of continents. These patterns of transnational distribution of family members and a very high mobility rate are widespread amongst the Somali. I became interested in the link between these current patterns and the nomadic lifestyle that for centuries was very common in Somali society. As Aden Yusuf, who now lives in the U.S.A. with his family, remarked in a comment on the concept of 'transnational nomads', 'Somalis treat the U.S.-Canadian border the same as they would treat the Ethiopian-Somali border: "If it rains better today, we move there". They are always on the move and changing their residency and they often do not like to be constrained by rules and regulations. When you define the term transnational nomads for the reader, you might want to include the secondary migration by Somali "nomads" in Europe, U.S.A. or Canada'.

A remarkable feature of the case selected is that Khaliif made the deliberate choice not to go to any of these Western countries. I was more often confronted with those who wished to go, and was particularly fascinated by the extremes of that wish as manifested in *buufis*. While working for a refugee organisation in the Netherlands, I had had to deal with the many problems that refugees face when living in the West. In the camps, I found an idealised image of life abroad, or at least a strong hope to go there. I tried to express my own picture of refugee life in the West but my cautions seemed to have no sounding board at all. This does not mean, however, that I cannot understand why people wish to exchange their lives in the Horn of Africa for a life in the West or assist others in doing so. Through various means of communication, the inequalities in life standards are now well known worldwide. Besides, the fact that Somalis have moved from the camps and send remittances from their new localities of course benefits many refugees in Dadaab. Khaliif was able to live a comfortable life because of monthly remittances and other refugees were able to survive due to an occasional money transfer, while a third group benefited indirectly from the dollars that flow into the camps. Migration has been a good investment for many, and it has improved life in the camps substantially.

A final issue of relevance in Khaliif's story is the fact that he is part of a wider network of relatives. This network is important in the decision-making opportunities of the individual in a number of ways. Although Khaliif's siblings and siblings' children tried to influence and enable his decision to move, he was the one who made the final choice. At the same time, his relatives gave him the luxury of that choice. With their monthly allowance he could have decided to move to Garissa or Nairobi, as quite a number of refugees from the Dadaab camps have done. His relatives offered him the opportunity to go abroad with his family but never forced him to do so. They could have done so by cutting his monthly allowance, as happened to others who did not abide by the wishes of their family members. It was only due to the continued assistance of his relatives

abroad, that Khaliif was able to live a comfortable life in Dagahaley. He decided to stay. From his point of view, Khaliif also treated the relationship in a considerate way. He was aware of the family responsibilities of a number of his family members and did not like bothering them. Instead, he preferred to wait for the initiatives of those who could afford to assist. Still, his wide network of relatives overseas was of great help to him for daily survival and in times of special need. To summarise, the book shows the importance for Somali refugees of social (assistance) networks in relation to survival in the camps and migration elsewhere, in particular to the West, without losing sight of the considerable variation between the level of power and choice that individual refugees have.

At a Distance?

The title of this chapter refers to and problematises 'distance' in a number of ways. In the first place, the social networks of Somali refugees often cover a great distance, as relatives live far away from each other. It is very common to find Somalis in the camps who have relatives living in Somalia, Garissa, Nairobi, South Africa, the Middle East, Canada, the U.S.A., Australia or Europe. But at the same time, this physical distance does not necessarily affect the closeness of relationships between them. Somalis travel a lot, and visit their relatives on numerous occasions. If face-to-face contact is not possible, they keep in touch through various means of communication. Many refugees in the camps contact their relatives inside and outside Kenya using the *taar* (radio communication transmitters) or phone, or they send messages and goods via those travelling to a place where relatives live. Another common way for relatives to stay in touch over long distances is through the *xawilaad* (an informal value-transfer system), which enables both communication and remittance sending. Through these means, social ties are kept strong and relatives play an important role in each other's lives and livelihoods, even over large distances.

Secondly, 'distance' refers to the detachment that supposedly exists between researchers and the people they study. In anthropology, there is ambivalence towards that detachment. On the one hand, the discipline's main method of data collection, participant observation, relies on a position of closeness in order to gain knowledge. At the same time, anthropologists realise that total immersion in the research context cannot be attained and they will always remain (partial) outsiders. Even those who do research within their own communities, and who thus share a similar sociocultural background, are at a distance simply because they have come to study others. On the other hand, the shared humanness between the researcher and the researched does bring about very valuable insights,

as it is the basis for mutual understanding. There will always be experiences or aspects of life that are recognisable for both sides. In my own research, the crossing of national and cultural boundaries was an experience and position I shared with the Somali, despite the fact that our reasons for crossing were completely different. If the world is seen as a place where moving and dwelling are in constant interplay, sites are not experienced merely by being present in them, but also by leaving them behind (Fog Olwig and Hastrup 1997). The anthropologist may be in a good position to understand what it means to be a transnational nomad, even though her or his level of power and choice is often far greater than that of refugees.

A third meaning of 'distance' relates to the assumption that, after data collection, the researcher needs physical as well as mental distance to analyse his or her fieldwork material 'objectively' and to write about it. It is commonly thought that, in order to be able to see patterns in the data collected and find explanations for these patterns, the researcher must leave the area she or he worked in. Yet, this involves a kind of appropriation of information that in recent years many social scientists have questioned. Various attempts have been made to deal with the ethical questions raised and more participatory ways of analysis and publication have developed in the process (see e.g. Jackson 1995). Furthermore, global developments in transport and communication have shortened the actual distance in time and space between the researcher and the people concerned, facilitating their participation in the analysis and writing-down of results. Personally, after my fieldwork was completed, I frequently visited Kenya, made many phone calls and exchanged information with a number of people in Dadaab. Besides, I have been able to disseminate my preliminary work through the Internet, e-mail and the postal system to Somali refugees, NGO employees and academics for comments. In the course of this book, I will elaborate further on this particular form of 'shared anthropology'.

Lastly, the title of this chapter refers to the attempt by many authors not to appear in their own academic work, keeping the Self safely, but dishonestly, 'at a distance'. The practice of rendering the researcher-author invisible largely stems from the common belief in an objective (exclusive, mastering) academic truth. Yet, knowledge is not simply 'out there'; instead, it is created in a dialectical and dialogical communication process (Schrijvers 1991) in which all those involved exert power. As such, the idea of social science attempting to arrive at an objective truth may need to be replaced with a vision of constructed, partial, fluctuating and conflicting truths. I agree with Haraway (1991: 190) that social scientists cannot arrive at anything but partiality in their attempts to describe and understand the world they are part of. According to her, this is not something they should try to transcend. Rather, the highly specific, wonder-

fully detailed and different pictures of the world should be investigated. The only way for a researcher to find a larger vision is by being somewhere in particular, by locating one's partial and critically situated knowledge (Haraway 1991: 190). I have tried throughout this text to allow the reader to establish my positionality as researcher and author, although of course this is a limited exercise as I have ultimately been the one deciding which constructed, partial, fluctuating and conflicting truths to select for this book.

Theorizing Refugee Agency and Vulnerability

When starting from a perspective of social sciences as situated knowledge, researchers should be aware of the ethics and politics behind their own and other people's attempts at categorisation and representation. It is important to question categories and analyses of an essentialist nature continuously (Scott 1988), in order to leave room for alternative representations. In the media and academic literature, refugees, in my view, are often depicted as vulnerable victims or cunning crooks. These images do no justice to the multifaceted and fluid humanness that characterise individual refugees, or to the agency that I found so striking in their attempts to deal with life. Agency has been defined as concerning 'events of which an individual is the perpetrator, in the sense that the individual could, at any phase in a given sequence of conduct, have acted differently. Whatever happened would not have happened if that individual had not intervened' (Giddens 1984: 9). Thus, agency firstly implies a level of choice, although the conditions under which a certain choice is made may vary. A range of specifiable circumstances may confine the options, but nevertheless a choice has been made (Giddens 1984: 15).

A second aspect of agency involves power: the power of doing things or leaving them, thus making a difference. According to Giddens, this transformative capacity is of importance irrespective of whether the outcome of someone's actions was intended or not. As such, his structuration theory avoids the common dualism between actor or agent and structure or system that is created by the assumption that an individual's or group's level of choice and power is constrained by larger institutional structures and social systems. In his view, the structural properties of social systems are both the medium and outcome of the practices they recursively organise: 'Structure is not to be equated with constraint but is always both constraining and enabling. This, of course, does not prevent the structured properties of social systems from stretching away, in time and space, beyond the control of any individual actors' (Giddens 1984: 25). Thus, the agency of actors is both enabled through and constrained by the structural properties of social systems, while simultaneously leading to their

reproduction. Conversely structure, while seemingly operating independently and decisive, only exists through the actions of individual agents. I will illustrate that current conceptualisations of refugees do not generally acknowledge such agency, and suggest an alternative approach.

Media Images of Refugees

When people are categorised as refugees, they are assigned certain characteristics as a group. This has a function for the different parties involved, such as governments, the UNHCR (United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees) and NGOs, academics, 'the general public' and the refugees themselves. Concepts, both in the sense of conceptions and constructs, are of great importance to people as they assist in classifying and giving meaning to the world, and in justifying actions. However, despite the utility of concepts, they must be used critically. As feminists and other critical researchers have stressed, it is important that academics continuously examine essentialist categories and forms of analysis critically, within both science and the larger society (Mouffe 1992). The issue is what concepts might allow people to think and how they allow them to think. This is particularly urgent, considering the fact that (theoretical) constructs are not only influenced by social reality, but also have an impact on the general discourse within that reality and thus on actions (Wolf 1994). The ideas that exist about refugees, in the end, have a clear effect on the reality of their daily lives. First, the labelling of refugees concerns the images created of them in the media, affecting public opinion. Secondly, it concerns a classification process for policy purposes, through institutional labels. In both cases, what is at stake is people's identity and entitlements: what (or who) is a refugee; and what rights does that give him or her?

In the media, quite standardised discursive and representational forms are used that create a certain image of refugees. First of all, there is a picture of horror and powerlessness. Refugees stop being specific persons, but are reduced to pure victims of the worst in humanity. They are stripped of the particular characteristics of their person, place and history; left only with a humanness of the most basic sense. Common representations of refugees as masses of people or as vulnerable women and children display their raw, bare humanity (Malkki 1996). It is assumed that the confrontation with the most horrific realities in life reduces them to vulnerables in need of protection and someone to represent them, so helplessness and dependency are stressed. Secondly, the representation of refugees amounts to a feeling of shame and unease because they do not fit the national order of things. In a world of 'imagined communities' (Anderson 1983), refugees form a threat and an embarrassment to the nation-state. They are described as people in a liminal position, as being

in between: for they have lost their nation, culture, identity and many other certainties in their lives.¹⁰ Thirdly, refugees are always related to problems, and not so much those that caused them to be refugees but rather the problems they themselves are causing simply by existing (Malkki 1996). The crisis is not located in the external factors that have lead to the creation of refugees, but in the existence of refugees in itself. This also leads to common representations of refugees as people who present bogus asylum claims (Kaye 1998). As such, an ambiguous picture is created of, on the one hand, 'masses' of refugees who have no agency at all, mostly remaining in the developing world and, on the other, individual 'crooks' who misuse their agency to come to the West and profit from various resources from which they have no right to benefit.

The public image of refugees as victims, liminal people and the cause of many problems is, in my view, a way of Othering them: of clearly distinguishing Self from Other. The experiences of refugees cannot be grasped by others, because that would entail a most dramatic confrontation with the arbitrariness of fate and the fleeting nature of life. Being in a refugee situation means an annihilation of the substance of a world, a culture, a history and a livelihood (Habib 1996). Those who are not refugees do not want to identify with the situation refugees are in as if it were a human condition: something that could happen to anyone. The image others have of refugees can be understood through the fear of them, as symbol of ultimate disorder and liminality. Visual representations of refugees often depict their bare humanity and extreme vulnerability. Looking at these pictures it becomes difficult to trace any connection between 'us' and 'them', except that bare humanity which is in all of us (Malkki 1996). This enables people who never had to flee to safeguard a sense of security by placing the experiences of refugees outside the Self and by denying any form of responsibility for them or their fate.

Now of course, there are many reasons why the described labelling and related processes of Othering refugees are problematic. First of all, the images presented are simply not true. Extensive empirical evidence shows that refugees conceive an identity very different from that ascribed to them (Zetter 1991). Still, they are constantly confronted with existing images, and they may become Other to themselves. A Kurd from Iran describes the discrepancy between reality and the image of vulnerability very accurately: 'the problem is the gap between the refugee's identity and the perception of the refugee by the host community. Kurdish refugees are survivors; they are strong and can contribute to the host society. Yet, they are still treated as newborn babies, left in an uncertain and unstable situation' (Horst 1997: 22). A Somali in Kenya describes another aspect of the problem, noting that they left Somalia as Somalis and arrived as refugees, as UNHCR statistics (Farah 2000: 16). Another one of Farah's respondents, a Somali man who now resides in Sweden, told him that

whereas in Somalia, they were defined by their family and clan responsibilities, in Sweden this was no longer the case. 'Here, we are refugees first, black Africans second and Somalis last' (Farah 2000: 190). What is problematic is that the complex identities of a single person are taken and replaced by one: that of a refugee. In the process, refugees are stripped of the specific features of their society, their place of origin and history.

A related issue is that this de-politicises fundamental inequalities and injustices on national and international levels, erasing the specific, historical, local politics of particular refugees. The practices of representation are very damaging because they actively hide the politico-economic connections that link television viewers' own history with that of 'those poor people over there' (Malkki 1996). The problem is that public images, whether accurate or not, both influence and are part of the politics and policies that determine the lives of refugees. These images, as they are represented in and formed through mass media, are both 'agenda-setting and news framing': they determine which issues are seen as priorities for policy development and political action, while at the same time, 'news' is a frame through which reality is socially constructed, influenced by, for example, the interests of politicians (Kaye 1998).

Institutional Labelling

The refugee regime and governments simultaneously label refugees institutionally, in order to determine their entitlements in terms of aid and protection. But even the various parties involved have great difficulty agreeing on who is a refugee and who is not and thus on who is entitled to aid or protection and who is not. Zetter (1991) describes labelling as a process by which people, conceived as objects of policy, are defined in convenient images. According to him, labelling involves defining a client group in stereotypical, clear-cut ways and then prescribing its assumed set of needs. Malkki (1996) gives a clear example of this process in her study amongst Hutu refugees in Tanzania. According to the Tanzanian aid workers she spoke to, refugees are poor and vulnerable and should look that way. In fact, they are at their 'purest' when they have just arrived, in their most desolate state (Malkki 1996: 385). After this first period of helplessness, refugees cannot be trusted. They are dishonest and make up stories for their own benefit. Such an attitude is rather common amongst government officials, NGO and UNHCR employees dealing with refugees anywhere in the world, including Dadaab.

Being categorised by others, refugees themselves also have an interest in the label they are given. They have an ambivalent attitude towards labelling and its implications because it categorises them in often negative and incorrect ways with which they cannot identify. At the same time, being labelled a refugee entails the entitlement to certain rights. These

rights can be claimed by stating that 'indeed we are vulnerable and thus entitled to assistance', a variant that I found very common in the Dadaab camps and will describe extensively. Other groups of refugees claim instead that 'indeed we are politically oppressed and thus need protection as well as recognition from the international community'. Malkki describes such views amongst the Hutu in Tanzania (Malkki 1995a) and I personally found this attitude to be common amongst Kurdish refugees in the U.K. The words of a young Kurd describe this political claim clearly: 'Refugeeness is implicit in the creation and construction of exile politics. It is a concept that turned politics into the cornerstone of our continuous identification process' (Horst 1997: 21). In both instances, inclusion requires conformity; the original story needs to be adapted to the bureaucratic dictates that come with the specific label (Zetter 1991). Thus, the system requires refugees to do what it accuses them of, to make up stories, as chapter 3 will clearly illustrate.

The bureaucratic needs of the international refugee regime and governments make it necessary to label the people that are entitled to assistance. To prevent a blurring of tasks, it is argued, refugee assistance projects should not deal with internally displaced, economic migrants, or locals. The UNHCR and NGOs use clearly earmarked relief money and project managers are accountable for the ways they spend that money. The system requires refugees to be defined and then counted, to prove efficiency (Harrell-Bond et al. 1992). When it comes to the content of the label, the UNHCR and NGOs benefit from the assumption that refugees are passive victims needing charitable dispensation. The assumed identity of refugees creates and imposes an institutional dependency; to become a refugee is to accept the passive role of recipient. This is taken to facilitate the distribution of aid and, moreover, the assumption of helplessness and a need for care is the cornerstone of nearly all appeals for funds. Lastly, labelling refugees has great political advantages because it enables segregation and control. The movement of refugees can only be directed and restrained if they are clearly distinguishable.

There are two main problems related to the kind of labelling occurring within the international refugee regime. In the first place, the idea of refugee dependency is presently seen as an absolute and fixed truth, whereas historically refugees have not always been treated as vulnerable victims in need of assistance. The refugees fleeing from Eastern Europe after the Second World War, for example, were seen as a unique potential for economic growth and also a proof of the failure of communism. These refugees were welcomed to help the underpopulated and 'underdeveloped' democracies of the U.S.A., Canada and Australia build up their economies; their education and skills were gratefully utilised (Harrell-Bond 1996).

But not only is the label incorrect and variable through space and time, it is also damaging. Such labelling serves to confine people's agency by placing constraints on refugees' attempts to utilise their own strengths. Since institutional labels often start from the premise that refugees are vulnerable victims in need of assistance, policies based on such labels do not recognise, let alone stimulate, people's own initiatives and in fact often obstruct them by, for example, regulating or restricting refugee movements and economic activities. According to some, there is a risk that a vicious circle will develop that leads to the so-called 'refugee dependency syndrome' (Buchwald 1991). When policies reflect the idea that refugees are vulnerable, their own resources, capabilities and views are disregarded completely. This may discourage them from taking initiatives while, at the same time, teaching them to conform to the label ascribed to them. A number of researchers (e.g. Harrell-Bond 1986; Buchwald 1991) and refugee assistance workers claim that this leads to a certain state of apathy and dependency. Various studies deny the existence of a dependency syndrome amongst refugees, and rather observe a strategic use of the label and what is expected (Kibreab 1993). But no matter whether the syndrome is factual or pretended, nonparticipatory policies are damaging to the dignity of refugees as well as the efficiency of policies.

An Alternative Approach

The dominant conceptualisation of refugees is highly problematic because it is incorrect and damaging to those conceptualised. On a number of occasions, I discussed this problem with refugees in the camps. Once, on a Wednesday morning, 15 December 1999, I visited Halimo Hassan in her block in Dagahaley for an interview. She answered my questions elaborately, understood what I wanted to learn and taught me a great deal. We talked about the misconceptions that exist concerning refugees and I commented how difficult it is for people to imagine that they could become refugees themselves. Halimo agreed, telling me about her own experiences. She recalled the time when she was living in Berbera (Somaliland). Her father worked as a sailor and she lived with her mother and her three brothers and three sisters.

In those days, I used to see Somali refugees from Ethiopia, and I never understood them. Who were they, and why were they there? But now, ironically, I have been a refugee myself twice. In 1988, one day before the fighting broke out, I fled with my husband and two children from Berbera to Mogadishu. Many followed us later, when the problems in Somaliland intensified. The inhabitants of Mogadishu regarded the refugees from the north with great suspicion and it was then that I was able to understand the position of the

Ethiopian refugees in Berbera. When the civil war started in 1991, we had to flee together with our hosts and came to Kenya as refugees.

According to Halimo, the Kenyans despised the Somali refugees who had come to their country. She wished she could warn them about the risk of becoming a refugee: 'Please, keep your government because we also had a government once, and look what happened when we threw it away'. She had been living the life of a refugee for over twelve years and had experienced great hardships.

During our second flight, we were captured by militia on the way to Kismaayo and taken hostage for one year. In 1992, after we were freed, we reached Liboya on the Kenyan side of the border. Two years later, we were transferred from Liboya to the Dadaab camps. Here, I sell *sambuusi* [samosa] at the market to supplement the food rations that are insufficient to sustain my family. I have also travelled to Garissa and Nairobi in order to try to communicate with my siblings and cousins in Europe. I had hoped that they could send me a monthly allowance, a sponsorship or even some money to return to Somaliland. But at the time of the interview, Halimo had not been able to communicate with any of her relatives.

Halimo's story illustrates two points that are of relevance to this book. In the first place, it expresses the self protective inability of human beings to understand the humanness in refugees and their experiences. Halimo could not understand the situation of the Somali refugees from Ethiopia she encountered until she became a refugee herself. This is a very common phenomenon that has been described in a number of studies on refugee situations throughout the world. In the film *We Are All Neighbours* (Christie 1990) about the civil war in former Yugoslavia, it is shocking to see how long it takes before people accept that they are part of the war. Even when the fighting is only some miles away, they do not realise that they themselves are involved in an ethno-political conflict. They cannot make the link between what they see happening around them and their own situation since, after all, in their village, people are all neighbours. Habib (1996) expresses the same type of 'ignorance' in relation to the war in Lebanon, when she writes that she only understood the reality of the situation in which she found herself, after family and friends were killed. She assumes that the main reason for not accepting that this was happening to her was probably the impossibility to understand and give meaning to her experiences.

Secondly, Halimo's observations and her attempts to sustain her family in the best way also provide an illustration of the fact that refugees are not simply victims, no matter how tragic the experiences they undergo. People always create their own history and future, even if they do it in conditions that are not of their choosing (Giddens 1984). Forced migrants

are active agents who, despite unfavourable conditions, will try to utilise the options open to them in order to be able to cope with life. As Jackson (1987: 22) argues, that is where the truth lies about which anthropologists should write: 'Truth is seen pragmatically: not as an essence but as an aspect of existence; not as some abstraction like Science, Rationality, Beauty, or God, to be respected whatever the circumstances, but as a means of coping with life'. To cope with life means learning not only to accept what one cannot change, but also to fight for those things one is able to change and to distinguish correctly between the two. The actor-oriented approach that I used in my research in a similar way ascribes a central role to human action and consciousness. It assumes that people are capable and knowledgeable when it comes to dealing with life, both in giving direction to it as well as in accepting it (Long and Long 1992). As such, I wanted to find a way to express the strength that I observe in refugees and to convey my understanding of their lives. Throughout this book, I have tried to do this by extensively quoting the refugees I spoke to in Dadaab and those who commented on my earlier work, as I will shortly explain further.

In order to understand the situation of Somali refugees in Dadaab, I also found it essential to place that specific situation in a historical context. In the academic world as well as within relief-providing organisations, crises are largely seen as external events interfering with a certain stable social reality. This viewpoint obscures the fact that insecurity is the normal state of affairs for many, and people have developed socio-economic security mechanisms to deal with it (Davis 1993). De Bruijn and van Dijk (1995) argue the same in their study on nomadic pastoralists in Mali, for whom insecurity paradoxically constitutes life's only certainty. According to these authors and others (e.g. Aronson 1980; Hjort af Ornäs 1990; Braun 1992), nomadic pastoralism is an adaptation to an ecologically insecure environment, so there is a danger of focusing on 'normal' conditions that are not very likely to occur anyway. With mobility being the most suitable strategy to cope with climate fluctuations, instability becomes an inherent characteristic of nomadic life. Similarly, the Somalis who had become refugees in the Dadaab area had faced all kinds of insecurities before the collapse of their state and developed various ways of dealing with those insecurities. As will be described in further detail in the next chapter, these were mainly based on mobility, strong social networks and dispersing investments within those networks. In situations of extreme scarcity or crisis, such as after flight from one's country, alternative means of survival may need to be sought. Yet, adaptation to insecure circumstances is often determined not only by survival functions but also by cultural values and history. The experience of the threat to a way of life may be more real than the experience of the threat of starvation (De Waal 1989). This is a very essential factor to take into account when studying the continuity or change in the social security mechanisms of refugees.

Somali Refugees in Dadaab: National and Regional Policies

At the end of 1991 and in early 1992, three refugee camps were set up close to Dadaab, to host the large influx of Somalis fleeing the collapse of their state. At present, approximately 135,000 refugees are still living in Ifo, Dagahaley and Hagadera. Most of the refugees in Dadaab originated from the regions of Jubbada Hoose and Shabeellaha Hoose, the lowlands of the two main rivers in South Somalia. There are also smaller groups of refugees from Ethiopia and Sudan, and a few individuals from Uganda and Zaire. Although the largest influx of refugees into Kenya took place in the early 1990s, up to this day new arrivals are registered in the camps. Their livelihoods in Dadaab are affected both by developments in Kenya's national refugee policy, as well as by the problematic location of the camps in Northeastern Province.

The Development of Refugee Policies in Kenya

Kenya did not host many refugees until it experienced an increasing influx from the late 1980s onwards, first as a result of the continued conflict in Uganda after 1986 and later from Ethiopia and Somalia. In 1990–1991, the arrival of 400,000 Somalis occurred simultaneously with the arrival of a large group of Sudanese young men, who had walked from Ethiopian camps after their stay there was no longer safe. Before this large influx, the involvement of foreign NGOs had almost been negligible and the government of Kenya was responsible for status determination on a largely individual case basis (Verdirame 1999: 56–57). Under pressure from increasing numbers, however, the government lost its ability to deal with the refugees and sought assistance from the international community. In order to attract funding, it agreed to designate specific areas to house refugees in camps and the UNHCR set up a number of camps throughout the country. The Sudanese were largely settled in Kakuma, a camp in the Turkana region of northern Kenya. The Ethiopians mainly stayed in Mandera, which is on the border between Kenya, Somalia and Ethiopia.

The Somali were initially spread over a number of camps. Those who came by boat from Kismaayo, Brava and other seaports in Somalia, arrived in Mombasa and were settled in Utange, Marafa and similar refugee camps close to Mombasa. These were amongst the better off communities, but also contained minority groups who had been particularly targeted during the war. Then, other well off Somalis came straight to the capital, Nairobi. Many settled in town while others were registered in Thika, a reception centre that had been set up by the government before 1991. The majority of less well off Somali refugees came into the country by road, on foot or packed into any type of vehicle able to make the jour-

ney. They were mainly from the south of Somalia and many of them spent time in Liboi and Mandera, before being moved to the Dadaab camps. Those who had relatives in Kenya, such as in Garissa town, were at times able to settle with them. Unlike Thika, the Mombasa and Dadaab camps were administered by the UNHCR. Another difference was that the refugees were required to stay in the camps 'until a durable solution was found' (Verdirame 1999: 57).

The shift in responsibility for the care of the refugees from the government to the international community had the positive effect of attracting external funds. The negative consequence was, however, that the *laissez-faire* policy before 1991 had provided few obstacles to the local integration of the refugees, except maybe that the overall situation of poverty in the country was a complicating factor. The refugees had a right to employment, education and freedom of movement. When the UNHCR took over, none of these positive aspects were preserved. It was not very efficient for the UNHCR to operate a large number of smaller refugee camps, and the government of Kenya was also not happy with the dispersal of refugees across a large number of campsites throughout the country. In Mombasa and Thika, tensions between the refugees and the local population also began to rise. Although many of the refugees had been forced to live in the camps, these camps were not far from the urban area and soon, a large number of self-settled refugees could be found in Mombasa. Some started businesses and were highly visible in the local market. There was unfair competition due to tax evasion by refugees, which was unacceptable to the local community. As a result, between 1994 and 1997, the government decided to close the majority of the camps in Kenya. The UNHCR's response was to organise a relocation of the refugees to Dadaab and Kakuma, the two camps in Kenya's most remote areas (Verdirame 1999: 68–69).

Despite the longstanding presence of refugees in the country, Kenya has no refugee legislation. Kenya is party both to the main refugee-specific international instruments as well as to general human rights treaties. It has signed the 1951 Convention, which defines a refugee as a person who, 'owing to well-founded fear of being persecuted for reasons of race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social group or political opinion, is outside the country of his nationality and is unable or, owing to such fear, is unwilling to avail himself of the protection of that country' (UNHCR 1996: 22). It has also accepted the OAU 1969 Convention governing the specific aspects of refugee problems in Africa, which forms the basis for UNHCR activities in Africa. This regional agreement broke new ground by extending protection to all persons compelled to flee across national borders by reason of any manmade disaster, whether or not they can be said to fear persecution (Hathaway 1991: 16). In Kenya, the issue is not lack of applicable refugee law at an international level, but



Figure 1.2 *Compound in Dagahaley.*

rather the deficiency in the implementation of the international treaties at a domestic level (Hyndman and Nylund 1998: 29). A draft Refugee Bill has been in existence for several years, but has never reached parliament. This has led to a situation where the refugees are not granted Convention status or any other legal certainty, but they are rather provided with temporary asylum on the basis of group determination. Their *prima facie* status offers few, if any, political solutions to the refugees (Hyndman and Nylund 1998: 47), as they are forced to stay in a place like Dadaab.

Refugee Camps in One of Kenya's Most Marginal Areas

It is common for refugee populations to be concentrated in camps that are located in remote, ecologically and politically marginal areas. This has negative consequences for their level of security, as is also the case for the Dadaab camps in the northeast. Kenya's Northeastern Province is a vast stretch of semi-arid land (Fig. 1.2) that has been the object of dispute between Kenya and Somalia since independence. Colonial borders have made the Somali a dispersed people and their fate is depicted in the five angles of the star on the Somali flag. These represent the Somali people in the British Protectorate in the Northwestern Somali region, the Southern Somali region under Italian rule, Djibouti, Ethiopia and Kenya. During and after colonisation, efforts were made to bring the parts together, although only Northwestern Somalia and Southern Somalia formed a union in 1960, soon after both gained independence. This union was put

under pressure when in 1991, Northwestern Somalia seceded from Somalia to form what became known as the, internationally not recognised, Republic of Somaliland.

In Kenya, Somali '*sijui*' live in the semi-desert of the Northeastern Province.¹¹ It represents 20 percent of the country and is mainly inhabited by Somali nomadic pastoralists, who constitute 1–2 percent of the total Kenyan population (Central Bureau of Statistics 1994). The contact between the Kenyan state and the Somali inhabitants of Northeastern Province has been limited. The state had no interest in the infertile land and was only concerned with preventing a revolt. This was not easy, since it inherited a potentially explosive situation from the British. In the colonial period, there was hardly any interference in social structures, although an attempt was made to reduce mobility. This attempt only led to stronger feelings of ethnicity and a call for separation from Kenya (Farah 1993). The British encouraged the desire to unite with the Somali Republic by investigating the wishes of the people through special commissions. In 1962, the Northern Frontier Commission was appointed to 'ascertain and report on public opinion in the Northern Frontier District (comprising the Districts of Isiolo, Garissa, Mandera, Marsabit, Moyale and Wajir), regarding arrangements to be made for the future of the area in the light of the likely course of constitutional development in Kenya' (quoted in Farah 1993: 79). In the same year, the Regional Boundaries Commission was to create new regional boundaries, taking into consideration the existing boundaries and the wishes of the people.

The postcolonial state in Kenya wanted to avert a further aggravation of the conflict situation. It applied its central power, using instrumental strategies such as the penetration of the province through administrative units. The Somali elite was given the chance to take part in state institutions. This made them feel recognised and gave them resources to distribute. The Kenyan government achieved its goal by creating an elite that could identify with the political centre and its values. Besides, political units were based on clan units, weakening ethnical sentiments through the stimulation of clan sentiments. Therefore, after the Somali state failed to take possession of Northeastern Kenya in 1967, resistance was tamed. This does not mean, however, that all friction has gone. Neither side has forgotten the past and present relationships are built on distrust and frustrations. Ali Bashir, a Kenyan Somali working for an NGO in Dadaab, claimed that the problem of banditry by Somalis was actually caused by the Kenyan government: 'Besides underdevelopment, the province faces repression. Innocent men are put into prison and tortured to get information. How can they go back to their families when they have been treated this way? When their pride is injured, when they have been rendered powerless? Their reaction is predictable: they turn to criminal activity,

they rebel and become bandits. This was a predetermined plan of the government to put the Somali in a bad light’.

During the British colonial occupation, the Province was run with special powers to bypass the national judicial system, under the guise of preserving state security. The postcolonial Kenyan government maintained emergency rules that to the present day give the national security forces wide-ranging powers. The Dadaab camps have been set up right in the middle of this politically sensitive, environmentally fragile and quite underdeveloped region of Kenya. The consequences are, of course, numerous. First of all, Dadaab is a very isolated area. Refugees travel from and to Nairobi by bus, passing the Garissa bridge checkpoint that makes it almost impossible to move in and out without being noticed. The busses nowadays operate on a daily basis; a great improvement compared to the once-a-week rides in 1995. From Dagahaley, there is also transport to Wajir, but otherwise there are few roads into ‘down-Kenya’. Besides, the main roads are not passable in every season. When the rains start, transport by road becomes impossible at a certain point in time. UNHCR staff members mainly travel by plane, except for the local staff from Northeastern Province.

This is not only because of the length and discomfort of travelling by road, but also because the roads from Dadaab are often not safe due to frequent attacks by *shifita* (bandits). These *shifita* operate on the roads and near the camps where they are feared for stealing cattle and raping women who go out of the camps to collect firewood. A lot of attacks even occur inside the camps. Thus, although the refugees left their country to gain safety and security, they still live in fear in the refugee camps. Another clear and important consequence of the location of the camps in Northeastern Province is that refugees and locals are very hard to distinguish between. Both groups use this fact with great skill in order to survive. Destitute Kenyan Somali nomads and others come to the camps if they have lost all ways of making a living or simply need an additional source of income. Here, they receive the rations that the UNHCR distributes. Refugees buy Kenyan IDs from local Somalis in order to be able to move freely through Kenya. Thus, people claim other labels than they are supposed to, simply in order to survive. This has led to a mix of substantial numbers of Somalis in the camps who are locals and large numbers of refugees who live in town despite the fact that they are not allowed to. The reality of Somalis coping with life through the flexible use of their identities forms another reason to acknowledge the inappropriateness of existing labels.

Collecting Information

Between July 1999 and June 2000, I carried out my main fieldwork in the three refugee camps of Dadaab as well as in Garissa town and Eastleigh, an area of Nairobi where most Somali refugees can be found. Additional data collection followed in July and August 2001, both in the refugee camps and amongst the urban refugees in Eastleigh. Doing research in a camp setting in an isolated and marginal area of Kenya brought conditions with it that are not necessarily common to 'mainstream' anthropological research. First of all, the security or insecurity of all those involved in the research, including myself, was an important factor in determining the nature of the fieldwork. Secondly, the rather artificial environment of the camps, being isolated and operating with a very hierarchical structure, shaped to a large extent the relations that I was able to establish with the refugees. It also affected the high level of unexpected and unpredictable fluctuations in day-to-day activities, including my own research activities, as schedules often changed at the last minute. The lack of communication and long-term planning 'from the top down' led to a situation in which I had to be very flexible in order to make use of my time in Dadaab as efficiently as possible. As I had been in the Dadaab region in 1995 for MA research, I at least had an idea of the possible effects of the specific conditions of life in the refugee camps in Northeastern Province on my research.

As I mentioned earlier, the worst problem with processes of refugee labelling is that they lead to policies that do not enable refugees to regain control over their lives. Thus, deconstruction of these common images is important in order to work towards creating a better position for refugees (Horst 2002). In line with Giddens (1984), such an approach would recognise the central role of human action and consciousness in transforming and sustaining the status quo while realising that the structured qualities of social systems, which are both constraining and enabling, are always beyond the control of individual actors. The concept of human agency attributes to the individual actor the capacity to devise ways of coping with life, even under the most extreme forms of coercion. Within specific contexts and limitations, individuals are knowledgeable and capable. Yet, they are not the only deciding and acting entities, as collectivities also have means of formulating decisions and acting. Agency, in terms of choice and power, depends crucially on the emergence of a network of actors who become (partially) involved in the lives of others. It requires the strategic generation or manipulation of a social network. As such, research cannot focus on the individual actor alone, but will have to focus on individuals within the context of a larger network of 'meaningful others'.

Another important aspect of understanding human agency is related to the ways in which people interpret their experiences. Individuals use cer-

tain narratives, or discursive means, to reach decisions and justify them. In most cases, there are various types of discourse to choose from, so actors face alternative ways of representing themselves, formulating their objectives and acting. I do not occupy a privileged position as researcher, but necessarily influence the communication process as others do, with intervention occurring both ways. By seeing academic knowledge-creation as a dialogic process, the strong polarisation of 'local' versus 'academic' knowledge is questioned. In my opinion, the separation between the two has little to do with epistemological issues, being far more a matter of power and control. I believe that social scientists need less essentialist ways of thinking and acting; focusing on the interactional, multi-layered, fragmentary and diffuse aspects of knowledge. Academic knowledge creation thus takes place through the 'dialectics of a dialogical ideal' (Schrijvers 1991). Accepting people's agency is not only a theoretical choice or political stance, but is also clearly reflected in research methods and epistemology. If one accepts the fact that refugees have a certain level of power and choice in determining their lives and livelihoods, this surely also includes the power and choice to create knowledge about and give meaning to their own situation. As such, research methods, in my view, need to involve dialogue between refugees, agencies and academics; leading to an exchange and discussion of ideas, concepts and theories.

I have tried actively to involve Somali refugees, policy makers and practitioners in both data collection and analysis, for which in particular various participatory approaches have proven relevant. Participatory research developed in the 1960s from a wish to counter the traditional subject-object approach, which was seen to be hierarchical and 'exploitative'. Rather, these approaches and methods tried to work from a more equal perspective, in which the research and research results should be of use to all those involved, often leading to subsequent action for change. I acknowledge the difficulties and dilemmas related to a fully participatory approach, not in the least because it is the researcher who initiates a certain research. Yet, I do believe that applying participatory techniques and being aware of the power involved in knowledge creation is highly valuable (see also Nelson and Wright 1995). Discussions with refugees in Dadaab on my research questions and methods proved vital for my fieldwork and research assistants have played an active and independent role in collecting data. These assistants were refugees who had participated in a workshop on 'Data collection and report writing' that I organised in each of the camps. During these workshops I used, and taught, visual participatory techniques such as mapping, matrix exercises, flow diagrams and pie charts, as well as group discussions (see e.g. Pretty et al. 1995). These exercises provided not only relevant feedback on my findings, but also opportunities to collect new research data. Besides, throughout the fieldwork I have engaged in multiple dialogues relating to my data and

various stages of analysis. This included sharing and discussing interview reports, fieldwork reports and later articles and preliminary chapters with Somalis, policy makers and implementers and academics. It also included organising sessions to discuss my research findings and writings with various groups in the community, including elders, CDWs and teachers.

Even after finishing fieldwork, I was still able to continue this process of receiving feedback and collecting new research data. Through e-mail, I sent preliminary chapters and articles to NGO staff members, who printed the texts and passed them on to the refugees involved in my research. In this way, I received interesting comments on earlier texts, some of which are included in the chapters concerned. Furthermore, I was able to establish contact with a number of refugees who had left Dadaab and were now living in Western countries. One of them, Abukar Rashid, advised me to send an article to a Somali Internet site, and after that, I frequently published my texts on various sites and received comments as well as new information from Somalis throughout the diaspora. Somalinet, for example, published my field reports, and added a 'forum discussion' through which anybody could respond to the writings. Interesting debates followed, to which I personally contributed a number of times in order to respond to various comments. In a few cases, the discussions went on in the less public space of e-mail. Somalinet then published a preliminary version of the first chapter to my thesis, adding my e-mail address and encouraging readers to send their remarks to me. Furthermore, I sent a number of my writings to a UNHCR staff member, who invited me to have it published as a working paper; appearing both on the Internet site as well as in hard copy (Horst 2001). This gave me feedback from policy makers, UN or NGO staff and researchers. I thus built up a list of e-mail addresses of a very specialised group of interested readers, combining Somalis in the diaspora with refugee 'specialists', and decided to utilise that resource.

Starting up a mailing list, I introduced my initiative as follows: 'Some days ago, a Somali student at Melbourne University asked me whether I had ever thought about "setting up a group of Somali people living around the world to give you advice on the methods you use, the areas you need to do more research on, or any other support you may need". At the same moment, I was going through some articles on diasporas, transnationalism and global networks. In many of these articles it was suggested that research in this field should be carried out within a transnational, transdisciplinary network consisting of academics, practitioners, policy makers and the "transnational migrants" themselves. I fully agree. The suggestion was brilliant and perfectly timed'. I would send any of my writings through this mailing list, and had discussions with its individual members on my analyses of the research material and other topics. I have added some of the remarks of these commentators,

who were mainly Somali students and professionals with a keen personal interest in my work. The 'transnational dialogues' between us added a fascinating dimension to my research (see also Mazzucato et al. 2004).

My understanding of refugee life in the camps and in town, as described in this book, stems from the combination of various ways of collecting data. These include common anthropological fieldwork methods such as participatory observation and the collection of life histories, as well as more interactive, dialogical and participatory methods. I have selected certain sections from, for example, an individual's life history, not only on the basis of that particular story, but also based on my observations in the camps, my participation in various events, interviews collected by research assistants and essays I received from refugee school children while teaching English composition. I have chosen to make use of direct quotations in order to do justice to the words and thoughts of refugees as much as possible, although it must be noted that these quotations are edited and selected based on their relevance to a certain topic. Much of these quotations stem from taped material as well as texts received from refugees, but I have allowed myself some more freedom in including quotations from group discussions and interviews that were not taped. Furthermore, most of the interviews and discussions did not take place in English. I have a basic knowledge of the Somali language, but felt that this was insufficient to capture the complexity of themes my research was dealing with. As such, the quotes included are based on translations. In what follows, I will never be able to present the immense amount of data collected, but I have made a selection based on the insights gained throughout my fieldwork. Furthermore, I decided not to write an extensive separate methodological account here, but instead, I have integrated information on my methodological approach in the text. This, I believe, does more justice to the idea of dialogical knowledge creation and it also sheds light on the situatedness of the information gathered.

Dilemmas Faced

Doing fieldwork in refugee camps and amongst urban refugees involves many dilemmas, a number of which I will discuss here. First of all, doing research amongst refugees who often live in terrible circumstances feels like highly inappropriate voyeurism when one can do nothing in practical terms to improve people's misery. During my fieldwork, I felt very uncomfortable when I was trying to explain what I was doing there, and how I hoped that the book I was planning to write would in the end contribute to better policies for refugees. It seemed so improbable and so minor, considering the conditions people were surviving in. Furthermore, through asking questions I at times triggered painful memories. I preferred not to ask too much, because I did not want to encourage refugees

to talk about traumatic experiences while I was in no position to assist them with the possible consequences of remembering such events. As both Malkki (1995a) and Hyndman (2001) argue, building trust may in the first place be related to the researcher's willingness to leave some stones unturned and to learn not to pry when this is not wanted. I do feel that as a consequence, people did at times narrate traumatic experiences to me and it is a great responsibility to try to convey what they have witnessed.

Another problem I faced was related to the image that people had of me, which determined the kind of information I was given. Having been in the Dadaab camps for nearly a decade, the Somali refugees were used to various types of white visitors. Only a very small number of those white visitors were students on long-term research projects like mine, whereas the majority were donors, evaluators, resettlement officers or journalists. Many of these people had something to offer in the form of financial assistance, projects or resettlement opportunities, and it was in everybody's interest to present the problems that refugees were facing in their daily lives. This, of course, stood in sharp contrast with my own interest to counter the refugee label by showing how Somalis were dealing with insecurity themselves. Whereas I tried to discover how Somali refugees helped themselves and each other, they tried to tell me about the problems they were facing and how they needed external assistance to solve those problems. And not only did this stereotyped image of me initially determine the answers I would get, it also created a picture of how I should think and act. I tried to counteract this picture by not confirming to what was expected of me, for example by going into the blocks on foot instead of by car and by dressing more according to Somali than Western standards. Small things like that, and simply being there for such a long time, gradually reduced the stereotypes.

Related to this is the problem of 'truth', which I will touch upon in most of the chapters. When I initially asked questions on refugee livelihoods and additional sources of income besides the food rations, most refugees would tell me that the ration card was their only source of income. Later, staying in the camps long enough to observe people's daily activities, I learned that most refugees did have additional resources. There was often also a great deal of suspicion towards the questions I asked and hence a reluctance to answer them. The *xawilaad* and *taar* operate with low profiles, because these businesses are mostly illegal in Kenya. Thus, it is not surprising that their owners were reluctant to talk to me and if they did, reluctant to provide me with much information. While I was in Garissa, the police was just carrying out a campaign against the *taar* in town, which made it completely impossible for me to get any valid information. However, not only *xawilaad* and *taar* owners regarded me with suspicion: Somalis in Dadaab were suspicious of my goals, and the research assistants were even suspected of being *shifita* who

were out to steal remittances. Urban refugees were reluctant to disclose themselves to me because they often lived in Garissa or Nairobi illegally. During my fieldwork, I tried to deal with these issues by being as explicit as possible about my own position and by checking the information I received through different informants or methods. In the writing of this book, I have tried to include dubious or contradictory cases, in order to give the reader an insight in the dilemmas I faced and the way I dealt with them. Besides, many Somalis in Dadaab and elsewhere have read earlier texts and their critical but positive comments have given me confidence in the analyses presented.

A final dilemma I want to mention here is of an ethical nature. In the current climate of restrictive trends in international migration, combined with post-'9/11' fears for Islamic terrorism, the material I have collected is sensitive and runs the risk of being misused by those having interests different to mine. I discussed the disadvantages of publishing certain information with my research assistants in Ifo. According to them, there are practices in and outside the camps that refugees would not want to be widely known, and some of these activities could be branded 'illegal'. It was suggested that donors might reduce or stop humanitarian aid if they would find out that refugees are assisting each other. Also, the Kenyan government might take action against *taar* and *xawilaad* offices. In general, they feared that negative decisions might be taken that would deteriorate the already poor living conditions in the camps. Throughout my research, I have been aware of the fact that collecting information is one thing, but using it in texts that are openly accessible is another. In my view, the only caution one can take to avoid that research information is misused, is to be very specific to oneself and others about the aim of the research and subsequent publications. This at times means leaving out information that could be easily misinterpreted or misused.

Transnational Nomads

Soon after my arrival in Dadaab, I realised the continued importance of the Somali nomadic heritage, including a high degree of mobility, strong social networks and a dispersal of investments, for refugee livelihoods there. Yet, this heritage has also changed, becoming largely transnational in kind. The links that Somalis maintain with relatives outside the camps are essential for their daily survival. These links do not only operate between Somalis in Dadaab and elsewhere in Kenya, Somalia or Ethiopia, but reach relatives throughout the larger diaspora as well. At least 10–15 percent of the refugees receive remittances, enabling a much larger part of the camp population to survive in the camps despite limited regional opportunities and insufficient international aid. These remittances are

largely sent through the *xawilaad*, which is an informal system of communication and banking operated by Somalis around the world. On a smaller scale, money can be transferred within Africa by using *taar*. Overall, Somalis make huge investments in such communication and transfer technologies, as staying in touch and assisting each other is of vital importance to them. The funds that are received by Somalis in Dadaab enable them to survive in the camps while simultaneously improving the general economic situation here. As a consequence of these monetary flows and the accompanying images of life in, for example, North America and Europe, many refugees in Dadaab dream of going for resettlement, and migration has become a popular investment. Such themes of interest, which link the lives and livelihoods of people in different places, closely match recent theoretical developments within studies related to transnationalism and diasporas. As these studies still largely ignore refugees, this book hopes to make a contribution in explicitly introducing a transnational approach to the study of refugees.

Transnationalism and Diasporas

During the last century, there has been a technological explosion in the domain of transport and communication that according to Appadurai (1996) has led to a new condition of neighbourliness amongst people. Information and communication technologies provide ever-widening circulations of material and interaction in real time. Faster and cheaper modes of transport also serve to move and connect people, commodities and ideas in greater numbers than ever (Rogers et al. 2001). This is not to say that there are no historical precedents to current patterns, because these surely exist. It is just that today, these systems of ties, interactions, exchanges and mobility function intensively and in real time while being spread throughout the world (Vertovec 1999). Technological developments have enabled transnational flows over large distances with much greater frequency, speed and regularity than was possible in the past, thus affecting a much wider group of people, including refugees in relatively remote camps such as Dadaab. Developments in transport created the possibilities to sustain transnational networks, while simultaneously the increased spread of information globally created the incentive to do so.

In this respect, Appadurai's discussions on 'media-scapes'¹² and 'collective imagination' are highly relevant. He suggests that the existence of the mass media has made imagination a collective social fact instead of an individual, private experience. His 'media-scapes' constitute the distribution of electronic capabilities to produce and disseminate information and images of the world created by these media. They provide large and complex repertoires of images and narratives to viewers throughout the world. Thus, media-scapes in the end create images of the lives of others

and of possible lives to be lived (Appadurai 1996). This does not imply happiness, since it produces images of well-being that cannot be satisfied by local standards of living and consumer capabilities. Instead, the process merely highlights inequalities. However, collective imagination can also stimulate agency, as it allows people to consider migration or design new forms of (transnational) civic association and collaboration (Appadurai 2000). This is exactly what, to me, constitutes the duality of *buufis*: on the one hand, images cannot be satisfied and only lead to frustrations about global inequality. But on the other hand, *buufis* as a form of collective imagination provides hope in quite a hopeless situation, and also increases people's level of power and choice.

The technological developments described also inspired developments in academic theorising, when the limits of existing theories and methodologies became evident. The concept of transnationalism was first put forward as an alternative to the dominant approach in migration studies during the 1970s and 1980s that limited itself to two possible conceptualisations of the migrant: either as someone who completely adapts to the culture of the receiving country or as a temporary sojourner who eventually returns to the home country (Rouse 1995). Rather than conceiving migration in terms of one or a few discrete moves, transnationalism conceptualises migration as a continuous flow of people, goods, money and ideas that transgresses national boundaries and in so doing connects different physical, social, economic and political spaces (Mazzucato et al. 2004). What sets transnational analyses apart from previous approaches is the focus on migration within a globalising economy and the questioning of the central role of the nation-state in determining migrants' activities and identities.

Whereas debates on transnationalism overlap with globalisation theories, they typically have a more geographically bounded scope. In globalisation theory, global processes are largely analysed as decentred from specific national territories and as taking place in a global space. Transnational processes, on the other hand, are seen to be anchored in and transcending one or more nation-states. Globalisation implies more abstract, impersonal, less institutionalised and less intentional processes occurring without reference to nations (Kearney 1995), whereas transnationalism brings about a sense of social networks and sees the flows within those networks as human accomplishments. The interest in global networks reflects the current movement away from general, macroscopic views of globalisation towards an intense study of networks and networking as the lineaments of the new world (Rogers et al. 2001). Thus, the study of transnationalism and diasporas has become increasingly popular over the last couple of years. Research programmes have been set up, new journals and book series are being published and transnational networks of multidisciplinary teams of social scientists are being established, with

inequalities in the international exchange between social scientists being a point of discussion. At the same time, the terms have acquired metaphorical implications and are used more and more by displaced people who feel, maintain, invent or revive a connection with a prior home (Shuval 2000).

In the excited rush, there is, not surprisingly, much conceptual muddling. It is important to review definitions and interpretations of transnationalism and diasporas, two concepts that are closely linked and often used in one breath. Transnationalism is used to indicate that the social relations emerging from contemporary global developments are not easily confined within the borders of nation-states. The term indicates a relation over and beyond, rather than between or in, nation-states, without disregarding the importance of borders. Basch et al. (1994: 7) define transnationalism as 'the processes by which immigrants forge and sustain multi-stranded social relations that link together their societies of origin and settlement. We call these processes transnationalism to emphasise that many immigrants today build fields that cross geographic, cultural and political borders'. Research often focuses on various types of flows within transnational networks, such as the movement of capital, commodities, cultural artefacts and (forced) migrants (Castles 2001). Transnational networks are the frameworks within which the communication, regulation and management of such flows take place, involving individuals, groups or institutions in different nation-states.

Diasporas are closely linked to transnationalism, as they have been defined as the 'exemplary communities of the transnational moment' (Tölölyan 1996: 4). A diaspora is a transnational social organisation or community of a particular kind. In theoretical work about diasporas, concepts of place and space, roots and routes are often linked and the main difference between the conceptualisation of diasporas and transnational communities seems to be the extent to which people's 'roots' are stressed. The word 'diaspora' is derived from the Greek verb *speiro* (to sow) and the preposition *dia* (over) and was used by the Greeks to mean migration and colonisation. For Jews, Africans, Palestinians and Armenians, it meant 'exile' (Van Hear 1998b). In this original meaning, the diaspora experience was related to traumatic occurrences, forceful dispersal and the not feeling at home of diasporic people in their new places of settlement. This may closely match the experiences of many refugees worldwide. Yet, currently, a wider range of experiences is being identified as diasporic. There seems to be a reasonable consensus on the main characteristics of diasporas, though various authors warn that these characteristics should not be interpreted as adding up to an 'ideal type'.¹³

Diasporas are expatriate minority communities that (1) have been dispersed from the homeland to at least two other places. This dispersal is often forced and involves uprooting and loss, but not in all instances; (2)

have a collective memory and myth about their homeland; (3) believe in an eventual return to their (idealised) home; (4) are committed to the maintenance or restoration of their homeland; (5) have a collective identity, group consciousness and solidarity. Whereas Safran (1991) assumes that this group consciousness is defined by the relationship with the homeland, Van Hear (1998b) and Clifford (1994) argue that a collective identity does not necessarily stem from the link with one place, but rather from the identification with co-ethnics in other countries; (6) are not fully accepted by, or have a troubled relationship with the host country and society; and (7) have a rich culture, selectively preserving and recovering their traditions. What occurs to me, as is also remarked on by Van Hear, is that these traits are still closely linked to ideas on ethnicity and the nation-state. Smith (1991) came up with similar lists for the definition of ethnic and national identity and they differ from the above only in not explicitly mentioning elements of migration. Whereas theories of transnationalism and diasporas provide social scientists working on migration and migrants with an interesting new focus and innovative research questions to ask, at the same time we should not overestimate their transformative power, as they are based on old theoretical models of ethnicity and nationalism.

Transnationalism and Refugee Studies

While the analytical perspective I just described has been applied widely to other groups of migrants in recent years, refugee studies largely remained uninformed by the discussions on diasporas and transnationalism. The academic discourse and practical efforts dealing with refugees continue to be informed by the assumption of a rigid separation between the exile's country of origin and country of asylum (Crisp 1999a). First, this reflects longstanding academic divisions between refugee studies and migration studies, where the first discipline supposedly deals with political or forced migration and the second with economic or voluntary migration. Refugee studies is still very much policy-oriented work of a reactive nature, with only a small number of publications making an effort to discuss conceptual or theoretical questions or understand individual migration strategies (Wahlbeck 2002). Secondly, it is tempting to treat refugees as a separate case because they enjoy a specific legal status due to the involuntary nature of their departure. This legal status does not allow them to go back to their country of origin, which obviously complicates the possibility of retaining transnational ties. Yet, in reality, many refugees are not legally recognised and thus do not have a separate status from other migrants.

A third reason for the limited interest within refugee studies for transnational processes is that it does not seem appropriate to understand the role of transnational networks in forced migration, because that

would fuel arguments that these refugees are fraudulent. Yet, I fully agree with Crisp (1999a) that it is essential to separate means and motivation clearly: fleeing through the assistance of others does not necessarily mean that migration was voluntary. On top of this, it has become increasingly difficult to make a clear distinction between voluntary and involuntary population movements, with political, ethnic, economic, environmental and human rights factors combining to cause people to move. Besides, refugees live alongside compatriots and co-ethnics who are part of a transnational community but who are not refugees. It is more profitable to focus on such communities as a whole than on those people who have been recognised as refugees (Crisp 1999a), as these different categories of people often make up one and the same family. I believe that the theoretical debates on transnationalism and diasporas can provide refugee studies with more adequate theories and clearly defined concepts, allowing researchers to study refugees in an increasingly interlinked world.

At the same time, I do recognise, and want to be explicit about, the possible drawbacks of a transnational approach for refugees. First of all, many refugees are not in a position to profit from transnational networks. Crossing national borders by means of communication or travel requires resources that not everybody can afford. Secondly, an idealised image of migration or other transnational flows may cause disappointments and a shift in people's attention from the here and now to the 'elsewhere and later'. Refugees may no longer be ready to invest in their present situation, because they imagine leaving that situation behind. Thirdly, even for those who do manage to migrate, life abroad may not bring what they were expecting. In the words of Aday Moxamed, a young Somali woman in Ifo refugee camp: 'when we fled the war, we prayed only for peace. Then when we arrived here we wanted shelter and food as well. Now if we go abroad again we will have new complaints. Life is a struggle and a human being will never be satisfied with what is there'. These are just some of the cautions that need to be taken into account. Others will become apparent later.

Throughout this book, I will illustrate how a transnational approach to the study of refugees might take shape. A transnational perspective calls into question the common assumption that sedentary life is the 'natural' state of society, and research amongst the Somali refugees in Kenya has provided a particularly stimulating case in this respect. As refugees, the Somalis have lost their homeland and the security of living in a place they can call their own. As 'a nomadic people', mobility, including mobility that crosses borders, is and has always been an essential part of their livelihoods and identities. The Somali are a particularly interesting transnational community because of the challenges they pose to existing concepts of the nation-state and categories of migration. For years, the Somali have not had a proper nation-state and some authors even argue that they never had one (Brons 2001). Somalis can be found in every coun-

try in the world, but they largely operate past or above nations. With their diaspora mentality they pose a threat to the nation-state and they cause further confusion because they do not clearly fit into a particular category of migrants.

Transnational networks perform important functions for many refugees, both in enabling their migration as well as in enabling their stay in a certain place. These networks are an important source of information about migration routes and countries of destination. For Somalis in Dadaab, transnational networks also contribute to feelings of *buufis*, of wanting to migrate, in the first place. Besides, these networks often provide the financial resources for migration and create the organisational infrastructure to enable migration through a variety of (illegal) ways. Upon arrival, transnational networks assist the newly arrived with subsistence and teach them how to survive in the new country. But not only do transnational social networks enable migration, they also enable people to stay put in a certain area, as in the case of Khaliif. The *xawilaad* system enables relatives and friends to send each other amounts of money that enable their survival in otherwise marginal areas. The relatively small amounts of money that migrants around the world transfer as remittances to their relatives and co-ethnics, now add up to at least 75 billion dollars a year, worldwide (Vertovec 1999). In the Horn of Africa, the annual total of remittances sent from the Somali diaspora is estimated to be approximately 130 million dollars (Perouse de Montclos 2000).

These considerable amounts of remittances may help people to survive in areas where this would otherwise not be possible, financial assistance from relatives in Western countries can be used for the development of those areas, and it also contributes to peace efforts in various regions (see e.g. Koser 2001b).¹⁴ What the remittances and other transnational flows of goods and ideas do most importantly, in sharp contrast to the established discourse on refugees as passive recipients, is that they give refugees a greater level of power and choice. A Kenyan hotel manager and good friend to Nuruddin Farah, the famous Somali novelist, illustrates this point most vividly. She tells him that in Kenya, generally speaking, 'Somalis are thought to be spendthrifts both of talk and of money, wasteful, loud-mouthed and uncouth. The impression is that they have an uninterrupted supply of money in hard currency, thanks to their families' remittances from their bases in Europe or North America. Implicit in our criticism is this: Do they behave in the way someone applying for refugee status behaves?' (Farah 2000: 32). Her words express the main point of this book perfectly: Somalis, as refugees, are supposed to behave according to the label that others attach to them. But since they are part of a network of transnational nomads, they are able to do otherwise.

Notes

1. Throughout this book, names of people and geographical names are spelled according to Somali official orthography. This script is not fully standardized, and I have chosen to use the Somali-English Dictionary of Zorc and Osman (1993) and McNally's *Atlas of the World* (1993). The letter 'x' in Somali is technically known as a voiceless pharyngeal fricative (Orwin 1995: 5). It is pronounced as a guttural h.

2. All names of those who participated in the research are pseudonyms, so as to respect the privacy of informants. In addition, people who might otherwise be identified easily are not named and neither is their gender revealed.

3. 'Hawiye' is the name of one of the Somali clan lineages. In Somalia, a complex clan system exists that determines social relations and one's position in society. Somalis from the clan lineages of the Darod, Isaq, Hawiye and Dir are by tradition nomadic-pastoralists and speak af-soomaali; whereas those of the Digil and Mirifle clan lineages, known collectively as Rahanweyne, are traditionally agro-pastoralists who speak af-maaymaay (Gardner and El Bushra 2004: 7). See further chapter 2, under 'Somali Identity?.'

4. 'Kh' is the sound generally used for the Scottish pronunciation of the word 'loch'. In Somali, it is only found in loanwords from Arabic (Orwin 1995: 5).

5. A number of words are written in Somali throughout the book. These words are translated in parentheses on their first occurrence, and can also be found in the glossary.

6. The 'c' sound is made in the same part of the throat as the sound 'x' but with vibration of the vocal cords (Orwin 1995: 6). It is the 'ayn of Arabic, somewhat similar to the 'aaaa' sound a doctor may ask for.

7. The term 'sponsorship' refers to arranging the migration of a subsequent (forced) migrant; usually involving considerable amounts of money (Shah and Menon 1999: 362).

8. In Kenya, education officially takes place according to the '8-4-4' system. Pupils from the age of six spend eight years in primary, four years in secondary, and then four years in university.

9. Names of commentators involved during the writing phase are also pseudonyms. An exception is made for those who are interested in the topic academically, because this allows the reader to see their comments in light of their present or future academic work.

10. The concept of liminality stems from Victor Turner (1967) and has been used by a number of academics to describe the situation of refugees (see e.g. Malkki 1995b; Turner 1999).

11. Somali 'sijui' are the Kenyan Somali. *Sijui* means 'I don't know' in Swahili, and various explanations exist as to the origins of the term. Most commonly, people say it is used by Somalis from Somalia to express the lack of knowledge of their original language and culture amongst the Kenyan Somalis.

12. Appadurai uses 'scape' to refer to realities of a fluid, irregular character that are not objectively given but rather depend on constructs.

13. Safran (1991) and Van Hear (1998b) offer a list of the main characteristics of diasporas, which I have combined here.

14. It should not be forgotten, however, that these remittances can also contribute to the continuation of war, for example by supporting warring factions (Koser 2001b; Van Hear 2001: 222). I will discuss this and other negative aspects of remittance sending in subsequent chapters.