The power of labelling:
a double-edged sword?

On the legal and social labels of
asylum-seekers and refugees:
A case study in Malawi

Master Thesis in International Development Studies
Miriam Reiboldt
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Abstract

The numbers of refugees, asylum-seekers and internally displaced persons has reached a record high in 2019. According to UNHCR, by the end of 2018 the total had reached over 70 million people. These people are continuously confronted with stereotypes or neglect, a form of labelling and emerging conflicts in the receiving countries - places they call their new homes. The category "refugee" and other connected labels have become predominant labels in people's lives. To understand the process of cultural adaptation and to examine the prevalent labels in a refugee context, a case study in a refugee camp in Malawi was conducted. As places like Dzaleka Refugee Camp function and represent a complex organisational setting with culturally heterogenous challenges faced by asylum-seekers and refugees, staff and host community alike, the use and existence of labels shall be examined. The underlying empirical data is based on thirteen weeks of field research conducted in 2019 in Malawi's only refugee camp: Dzaleka. Through interviewing people living at the Camp, this research aims to fill the existing gap of seeing "refugees" not just as one group receiving one label, but rather as people who are facing several labels. Likewise, this research underlines the need in for a change of refugee policy in Malawi, as the predominant labels and conflicts faced by people living in the camp can be connected to the dominant policies of Malawi. It became apparent that the use of the legal label is not the only relevant categories refugees find themselves in. The culturally connected practices play an important role in people's everyday life. Furthermore, labels implemented by the host community as well as the organisations working in the camp have an influence on how refugees see themselves, how their identity is perceived and most importantly, which benefits and limitations those labels hold.

Key words

Refugees, labelling, protracted refugee situation, Malawi, Dzaleka Refugee Camp

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Zikomo Kwambili – Thank you – Asante Sana – Danke

Miriam

Untold

By Mutombo Esdrass
–
the Branches Art, Dzaleka Refugee Camp, Malawi

Untold stories
Untold worries
Untold hunger in untold bellies
Untold tomorrow
That will always bring sorrow
We spite untold sickness
Untold

The bursting sun burns
The howling and rolling wind dance to the untold song of distress
We are standing so long on that zigzag queue
Heaped in one place with untold worries
Waiting for untold decisions

Out heart beat bleeds every corner of life
Our saliva has become bitter
Our trousers bigger
We think and think deeper
For a better tomorrow
Because what we face is inner pain and psychological sorrow

We fight and push to get the line moving
The days are going, the years cruising
See the vapor of trauma from my brain oozing
We are given everything, but we are not allowed to make a living
That's an untold beginning that leads to an untold morning
Jobs of fathers is drinking Kachasu[1]
Yet your decisions are untold places from Karonga, Luwani to Dzaleka
That's the rhythm of our living

Untold stories
Untold worries
Untold hunger in untold bellies
Untold tomorrow
That will always bring sorrow
We spite in sickness

[1] Traditionally distilled alcoholic beverage

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Abbreviations

UNHCR – United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees

RSD – Refugee Status Determination

GO – Governmental Organisation

NGO – Non-governmental Organisation

CBO – Community Based Organisation

POC – Person of Concern

WPF – World Food Program

CARD – Churches Action in Relief and Development

JRS – Jesuit Refugee Service

OAU – Organisation of African Unity

DRC – Democratic Republic of Congo

1 Introduction

Throughout people's lives, labels will be attached onto them and they will attach labels onto others. Those labels reflect and affect how people are perceived and how they identify themselves. Labels can be positive, reflect characteristics and provide goals. Sometimes, however, those labels can be the result of unfounded assumptions and stereotypes. People apply labels to almost everything and everyone they meet. Labels therefore influence their perception and understanding of the world. Sometimes, this is intentional - sometimes it is beyond control.

The Cambridge Dictionary defines a label as "a classifying phrase or name applied to a person or thing, especially one that is inaccurate or restrictive" (Cambridge Dictionaries: 2019). Therefore, a label is often used to categorise people in an inaccurate manner. According to the same dictionary, a category is defined as "a class or division of people or things regarded as having particular shared characteristics" (ibid.). This means labels and categories are used to highlight similarities and differences between things and people. Consequently, once a label is applied, this one specific attribute used to distinguish the label might stand over any other feasible category. Therefore, labelling could reduce a person or group of people to just one label, opposed to a variety of description that would allow others to picture this person or group as unique individuals with a variety of characteristics and labels.

Hence, if 1000 randomly selected individuals from different countries were brought together, they might not have much in common. Labelling this group due to one similarity could then be difficult. So, the question arises how 26 million people can be put into the same category?

Those 26 million people, for instance, fell under the label of being a "refugee" in 2018 according to UNHCR (UNHCR: 2018). Generally, one common group that is confronted with labelling are forcibly displaced people, from the first procedures of status determination to the structural determinants of life chances these people are facing. As Zetter stated in 1991, "labels infuse the world of refugees" (Zetter 1991: 39). Nowadays broad attention has been paid to forcibly displaced people, as "forced displacement due to conflict, persecution or development are conditions that characterise the lives of millions across the globe" (Gupte/Mehta 2007: 24). Not only on the African continent, but throughout the whole world around 68 million people are on the run from violence in their home country (UNHCR: 2018).

One place where many refugees[2] seek shelter is the Dzaleka Refugee Camp in Malawi, which has turned into a central hosting country for migrants from the Horn of Africa and the Great Lakes region - representing a haven for many. Malawi hosts around 35,000 asylum-seekers, refugees and displaced people (ibid.).

Forced movements of populations in any kind have extraordinarily diverse historical and political causes and involve people who, while all displaced, find themselves in totally different situations and predicaments.

As Malkki (1995) explains, it is now taken as a basic principle in much of the refugee literature that refugees are mostly a problem of the Global South[3]. The rapid decolonisation of African countries in the 1960s marks an important period for the modern phenomena of displaced people and settlement practices as they are known today. The establishment and movement of nation-state boundaries, and the "global consolidation of processes of extraction and impoverishment" (Malkki 1995: 496) are just two factors that lead to the Global South being a vast source of refugees and migrants and therefore a vast asylum zone (ibid.). According to the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), a refugee is defined as a person who has had to flee war, conflict, or persecution for reasons of race, religion, nationality, membership of a group or political action and crossed an international border to find refuge in another country.

Focusing on the complexity of labelling refugees and asylum-seekers, this research hopes to examine the agency of people being forced to flee to shape their lives and make choices about settlement, livelihood and social networks in their new homes (Gupte/Mehta 2007: 64). Furthermore, this research focuses on the stigmatisation around forced migrants and the process of categorisation which imposes labels upon people.

As Edward Said states, labelling is an unstable act "made up of human effort, partly affirmation, partly identification of the Other" (Said 2003: 3). Furthermore, the active role of policy frameworks and laws in determining the status and connected rights, livelihood options and future will be examined throughout this research. This research acknowledges the challenges states face with mass migration, but it will argue and highlight that it is highly problematic to label

[2] This Thesis will further differentiate between refugees and asylum-seekers in order to distinguish between the legal category. Asylum-seekers are people who have applied for refugee status but have not been granted yet (UNHCR 2019). In general, the label asylum-seeker can historically, and in the underlying framework overall, be seen as directly interlinked and therefore explained as "part of" the refugee category firstly. The distinction will follow later.

[3] The term "Global South" refers to specific regions in Africa, Asia, Oceania and Latin America, formally called "third-world" countries. The term shall mark a shift towards the emphasise on geopolitical power relations, away from focussing on the former development status.

large cohorts of forced migrants together, simply to make short-term policy easier (Gupte/Mehta 2007: 65). Problems connected to labelling people and generalising categories increase stigmatisation, which leads to an increase in inequalities and problems with social integration. Furthermore, labelling can lead to exclusion, as, once labelled, there are clear constructions of "us" and "them", which is at the very core of Said's Orientalism (Said 2003: 3).

1.1 Research Objective

The goal of this research is to provide an opportunity to explore some of the labels used in the refugee context and consider the ways those labels affect how people think of others and themselves. Dzaleka refugee camp will function as a case study, where the everyday lives of those labelled will be explored. This will be achieved by examining the prevailing labels that are used in the broad sense of refugee context by revisiting questions such as: Who is an asylum-seeker? Who is a refugee? What does it mean for people's lives to be displaced and labelled? How are the categories people find themselves in experienced? The latter represents the research objective, as the Great Lakes region continuously create refugees because of its ensuing conflict. This research hopes to fill the knowledge gap on how African refugees experience given labels and what advantages and disadvantages these might hold. It is important to find out and disentangle some of the complexities in experiencing labels imposed onto people living in a refugee camp, as these have an impact on people's lives in general, and especially on displaced people. As labels are existent in and continuously a top-down phenomenon, there is a need to conceive and understand those labels and how people experience these imposed upon them. The traditional labelling of refugees bears the risk of decontextualising suffering, and as explained later in greater depth, there is a difference between how forced migrants view themselves and how current policy frameworks label them (Gupte/Mehta 2007: 75).

Thus, this research will interrogate how, and with what consequences, individuals fleeing crisis in the Great Lakes region to Malawi are given various legal, bureaucratic and social labels by different actors such as humanitarian, state and local governments. Moreover, it will examine how people experience the category in Dzaleka refugee camp in Malawi, as there has been limited research on experiencing categories and building livelihoods within these categories. This thesis will therefore answer the research question:

"How do people experience the legal and social category they find themselves in and in which way are they adapting to- and living by this label in the Dzaleka Refugee Camp?"

1.2 Research relevance

The term refugee is a "socially constructed label with complex legal, ethical, and political connotations" (Vigil/ Abidi 2018: 54). Recently, refugee numbers worldwide have reached record high. In June 2019, the UNHCR's "Global Trends" report stated that by the end of 2018, for the first time ever, the number of displaced people has reached 70.8 million, over 26 million of those being refugees. In a world where conflict and instability due to war and climate change are increasing, refugee situations will persist.

With states increasingly fortifying their borders, the integration and handling of the individual people, children, and families is more relevant than ever. When refugees are within the borders of a host country, the camps where people stay are often at peripheral sites, keeping refugees at the edges of the society (Davies et al. 2017: 1275). Even more than just physical boundaries are the social and political borders often drawn within society in host countries. In this way, refugees are not only physically kept separate from the rest of the host society, but also psychologically. Current solutions are failing to address the crisis adequately.

Additionally, refugees are often perceived as "temporary", while thousands of people spend decades living in camps (Ehrkamp 2017: 817), leading to protracted refugee situations such as Malawi. Refugees entering countries are often portrayed negatively, which can exacerbate instability, crimes and the illegal sector (Whitaker 2003: 211). These negative tendencies create excessive obstacles and barriers on the contribution refugees could have on their host country. To fully understand how asylum-seekers and refugees experience their category, it is also necessary to assess how the host region experiences the positive and negative effects of refugees. As the Dzaleka refugee camp in Malawi is home to over 35,000 asylum-seekers and refugees, it is interesting to identify the opportunities and risks experienced by the surrounding host-communities, to get a better understanding on how they experience the camps presence. A reason for the controversy and prejudices against refugees could be the perception that refugees receive preferential treatment from the international community, as assistance programmes normally focuses on refugees rather than the members of the local community (Crisp 2000: 164). As governmental policies are determined by central public opinion and attitudes, the opportunities for inclusion and participation for refugees are dependent upon those (Hynie 2018: 272). Yet, "the contemporary refugee label, which attempts to group together an extraordinarily heterogeneous population of people, fails to nuance the diverse historical, social, political, and cultural contexts that drive forced migration" (Vigil/ Abidi 2018: 54). Therefore, this research

aims to enhance knowledge about the livelihoods options and adaptation strategies as a result of labelling of refugees and asylum-seekers, as well as their self-perceptions and their chances in a refugee camp. The strengths and limitations of the legal and social categories and the framework the people find themselves will also be considered. Overall, this study is significant because accompanying labels is prejudice stigma. For this reason, assigning a person to a certain category for special handling purposes leads them to be labelled for life; a step that should be carefully considered and examined thoroughly.

1.3 Thesis structure

To get an insight into the underlying concepts of this thesis, the following chapter will present the research framework. In this section, the existing literature will be displayed, and the research gap will be highlighted. Following this, the conceptual framework and the research question with the connected sub-questions will be introduced. Chapter three will cover the regional setting and give a historic overview as well as background information and insights into the research site. Next, the methodical approach of the field work and this research will be explained. There will be a special focus on the sampling methods and data collection in the field as well as the positionality and limitations encountered. In chapter five, the research activities conducted will be presented. Following this, the findings and results are described. This leads to the analysis and discussion part of this thesis. Finally, a conclusion will be drawn with special focus on outline and further policy implications.

2 Research Framework

This introductory section will provide a literature review to explain the main topics and objectives of this research. Following this, the relevant theoretical concepts will be discussed. The theoretical background will firstly provide an overview of the available literature relevant to the underlying framework of this thesis. Specifically, the concepts of labelling connected to several sub-concepts like different examples of labelling and the experience of it will be displayed. Moreover, the concept of othering will be covered, and the perception of the local community and why these are important for the underlying framework will also be pointed out. After presenting the theories and approaches that will build the framework for this research, the existing research gap will be highlighted and finally the conceptual framework will give a summarised overview to lead to the explanation of the research questions. This will form a theoretical foundation that will be re-addressed in the analytical part of this thesis.

2.1 Labelling

The literature review will identify that labelling has always been a fundamental social process in human behaviour and interaction. As people rely upon skills and memories of classification, the relationships move from inner to outer circles – referring to kin and friends to strangers or from gemeinschaft to gesellschaft, as Tönnies stated in 1887. The interesting question which arises is the connection of labels and power relations in the private and public domain. The public domain is in the context "of institutionalised power within a wider framework of political economy, within which policies are constructed to allocate resources and opportunities under conditions of overall scarcity" (Wood 2007: 19).

Labelling is therefore a process, that occurs "at different levels and within different arenas of interaction" (Wood 2007: 20). This means labelling does not only exist between the state and the people in the society, but also between people and through "constructions of social othering and identity creation" (ibid.).

One group that is often confronted with labelling are forcibly displaced people. Two groups who fall into this category are refugees and asylum-seekers. As asylum-seekers and refugees are leaving their home country behind, they are confronted with different countries' norms, values and new labels. So, labels have an influence on the world of refugees and might lead to stereotyping, "which involves disaggregation, standardisation, and the formulation of clear-cut categories" (Zetter 1991: 44). Here, for this specific heterogenous group, labelling can lead to

de-linkage, which is the transformation of one's own identity being replaced by a stereotyped identity.

2.1.1 Legal labels

As Hayden (2006) states, migration has taken a renewed importance in policy circles and academia. Since then, refugee studies and forced migration have become an important part of this phenomenon. Meanwhile migration and refugee movement has changed in the context of post-cold-war geopolitics, which calls for a clarification of these categories theoretically (Hayden 2006: 471). Hence, to fully understand the concept, the history of the categorisation of refugees needs to be examined first.

Migration is inherent in human nature. Ever since the existence of humankind, survival and adaptation led hunter-gatherers to move to different places across Africa and Eurasia (Marsella/Ring 2003: 3). Different waves of migration are the source of people moving to new places or countries, sometimes "for freedom, hope or identity" (ibid.). Another factor is colonialization, which forced people to leave their land over decades, just as Jewish people migrated and fled facing the programs of the 19th-centruy Russia and the devastation in Europe. In the light of migration, the controversial term "refugee" is embedded and interconnected (Marsella/Ring 2003: 12).

The term refugee was first applied to French Protestants forced to leave France in the wake of the French Revolution and was used again and more commonly as a response to the mass displacement after World War I, and even more so after World War II (Vigil/Abidi 2008: 54). So, people who were lacking adequate protection and seeking new homes were recognised as refugees. This led to the differentiation of separate groups and the distinction between those who have protection and those who do not (Warner 1992: 367). The Geneva Convention defined a narrow category of "refugee" as being in fear of persecution as a result of the events occurring before 1 January 1951 and is outside his former habitual residence or country (UNHCR 1979: 29). This "geographical and time limit were changed in the additional protocol relating to the Status of Refugees promulgated in 1967" (Marsella/Ring 2003: 12).

To clarify: an asylum seeker is a person who is seeking international protection but whose claim for refugee status has not yet been determined (Phillips 2013: 3). In contrast, definition of a refugee is based on the United Nations' Protocol and used mostly throughout academia when referring to refugees:

> *"The term 'refugee' shall apply to any 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, unwilling to avail himself of the protection of that country; or who, not having a nationality and being outside the country of his former habitual residence as a result of such events, is unable or, owing to such fear, is unwilling to return to it."* (UNHCR 2011: 14)

In many countries in the Global South, a wider definition for the protection of people is dominant, including "victims of war and external aggressions" (Black/Oeppen 2014: 503). But although adapted, the Geneva Convention remains the basis for getting refugee status granted (Marsella/Ring 2003: 12). So, people have always sought refuge and sanctuary, but the specific term "the refugee", as a legal label and as a social category, as well as a problem of global dimension started around the time of World War Two (Malkki 1995: 497). Moreover, the idea of a "refugee camp" became in place "as a standardised, generalisable technology of power in the management of mass displacement" (Malkki 1995: 498).

Due to the above mentioned, the contemporary refugee label combines and connects a heterogeneous population of people. Critique arises because of the failing differentiation of the "diverse historical, social, political, and cultural contexts that drive forced migration" (Vigil/ Abidi 2018: 54). Through different evolving conflicts and the ongoing climate change, according to UNHCR there has been an unprecedented caseload of refugee status applications. Therefore, a backlog happens, where the "capacity to determine refugee status continues to fall far short of the needs" (Barbour 2018: 1) and applications pile up. Amongst other things, due to the use of systems like Individual Refugee Status Determination, a backlog in status determination in general is happening even in well-developed asylum systems in the Global North, as well as the Global South. In 2016, 2.2 million applications for refugee status have been submitted to UNHCR or one of the other 164 countries or territories receiving people who are forced to flee (Barbour 2018: 1). So, by the end of 2016, there were 2.8 million registered asylum-seekers overall. Those specifically are defined by UNHCR as "people who are seeking international protection but whose refugee status is yet to be determined" (UNHCRa: 2019). This means refugees and asylum-seeker spend their first, "most vulnerable years in their countries of refuge without having been individually adjudicated to meet the international refugee definition" (Kagan 2017: 197). Because of the sovereignty of every state, governments have the right to exclude foreigners. This changes when it comes to forced migration and especially, if those migrants would "suffer mortal harm if sent back home" (ibid.). In academic literature it has been

successfully highlighted that “the ways in which refugees are constituted in relationship with states and […] the [refugee] category is inherently an ethical one” (Hayden 2006: 472). Nonetheless, is has remained “impossible to define refugees in such a way that legal, ethical, and social scientific meanings of the term could align” (ibid.). Moreover, the fact that the “definition of refugee as a category has been biased towards the individual has been recognized” (Hayden 2006: 472).

Warner (1992) explains that “for the purpose of asylum, the legal differentiation between refugees and non-refugees is crucial, which explains continuing debate about the refugee definition” (Warner 1992: 366). He further elaborates on the different distinctions of narrow and broad approaches of the refugee category. The 1951 Convention/1967 Protocol on the one hand, and the 1969 OAU Convention and the 1984 Cartagena Declaration on the other hand have specific advantages and limitations. The narrow definition of refugees allows that “once a person has been determined to be a refugee, and not an economic migrant, international refugee law can serve its protective function” (Warner 1992: 366). The advantage of this is - the narrower the scope, the greater the depth of protection for that group. Warner explains the “disadvantage is that the full weight of protection falls to a limited category. The broader definition obviously includes more people and is flexible enough to deal with situations not envisioned when the original definition was drafted” (Warner 1992: 366). Warner’s arguments go in line with the before mentioned theme, that the simple act of categorisation implies that the group of refugees obtain certain characteristics, clearly separating them from others. Not to mention the fact that the Refugee Convention says, “nearly nothing about [the refugee status determination] procedures” (Warner 1992: 366). The categories also add to a prescription of assumed needs. It involves judgements and distinctions, and the categories acquainting are bureaucratically often unquestioned (Zetter 1991: 45). Labels are not only political but also dynamic, as the label might be the consequence and cause for later policy development (ibid.).

Subsequently, it is important to mention that forced population movement has very diverse historical and political causes and involves people who, while all displaced, still find themselves in very different situations and predicaments (Malkki 1995: 496). It seems, that the term “refugee” is useful as a broad legal category but is not useful to describe a “generalizable "kind" or "type" of person or situation” (ibid.). Malkki pledges that involuntary or forced movements of people are always only one aspect of much larger constellations of socio-political and cultural processes and practices. She goes as far as describing and tracing different institutional domains which use the term “refugee” and “in exile” to construct a certain kind of group.

2.1.2 Social labels

The underlying idea of the labelling theory is the social construction of the reality. This was shaped by the sociologist Howard Becker (1963), with the core ideas found in Emile Durkheims work (1893) (Crossmann: 2018). Becker is credited with one of the most influential designs of the labelling theory, where he distinguished that deviance is not an intrinsic feature of behaviour, until a social group defines them that way.

The main source of labelling depicts a more dominant group of a society creating and applying labels to the subordinate group. If the labelled individual wants to shed the given label, it may be difficult. The labelling framework has often been used to understand deviant and criminal behaviour but can also be extended to other social constructs (Crossmann: 2018). Essentially, labelling theories underlying idea is that people define and construct their identities based on society's perceptions of them (see Becker 1963). Therefore, scholars like Limbu (2009) call for a change in the narrative of the refugee context in general.

2.1.3 Positive and negative aspects of labelling

Research concerning positive and negative aspects of labelling mostly focus on child education, socio-economic backgrounds and around bias towards race and ethnicity (see Cappella 1981, Darley/Gross 1983, Moulton/Moulton/Housewright/Bailey 1998). Here, research has demonstrated, that two different processes are leading to the confirmation of a "perceiver's beliefs about another" (Darley/Gross 1983: 20). The first one is called the "behavioural confirmation effect" (see Snyder/Swann 1978). This is based on Merlon's (1948) description of the "self-fulfilling prophecy" (ibid.). In this process, a labelled person is channelled by the behaviours that are expected in an interaction. The second process is referred to "cognitive confirmation effect" by Darley and Gross (1983). This term is used to describe a confirmation of expectations when no interaction between labelled person and person labelling has been happening (Darley/Gross 1983: 21). In this case, selective interpretation of attributes or recalled aspects in ways that are consistent with the expectations of the person implying the label are relevant. In other words, labels are used to refer to people. Those might have a negative influence on what the people might think of the labelled person or themselves (ibid.)

2.1.4 Experiencing the label

Through giving and receiving labels and categories, other people impose labels. This is creating a group, different to the self-perspective. As identities are always in some sense social, this process is sometimes referred to as "othering" in academic literature (Jensen 2011: 63). This concept was first used as a systematic theoretical concept by Spivak in 1985, it was further developed and used in early postcolonial writing by Edward Said (ibid). Said describes "othering" as the way members of one social group distance themselves from another. Additionally, the "other" group will be constructed as fundamentally different. The social group constructing the "other" will assert themselves as dominant. Said explained that, "the development and maintenance of every culture requires the existence of another different and competing alter ego" (Said 1995: 332). Moreover, the construction of identity is supposed to involve "establishing opposites and otherness whose actuality is always subject to the continuous interpretation and reinterpretation of their differences from us" (ibid.). Therefore, identity formation is connected to the concept of othering, which can also be defined as a "process of differentiation and demarcation, by which the line is drawn between 'us' and 'them' – between the more and the less powerful – and through which social distance is established and maintained" (Lister 2004: 101). Extensive empirical evidence illustrates that refugees conceive their identity very differently from those bestowing the label (see Harrell-Bond 1986, Mazur 1986, Waldron 1988). As stated above, labelling relates to power relations. In the institutional setting labelling defines a group and prescribes a top-down set of needs and distribution, for instance of food, shelter and protection (Zetter 1991: 44). Zetter (1991) additionally explains how the "superimposition of institutionally determined refugee status greatly destabilises the co-existing ethnicities of host and refugees" (Zetter 1991: 45). Ambiguous identities emerge which have an influence on re-establishing "community". This phenomenon is widely documented in refugee populations but by "disaggregating the label in order to form it into bureaucratically manageable individual cases", the criteria is said to have prevented village re-formation and integration (Zetter 1991: 49). The Geneva Convention marks the point of departure for the label "refugee" (Zetter 2007: 176). Thus, there are nowadays different, yet "more subtle forms of persecution in the contemporary world which reflect a less categorical interpretation of the label 'refugee' and the slow onset of forced exile" (Zetter 2007: 177). Minority groups can be persecuted through different "insidious forms of social, political and economic exclusion, often without explicit violence, and often over protracted periods" (ibid.).

As refugees and people in refugee like situations will often try to seek shelter in a different country, there is a need to register and apply for the refugee status. At this point it is interesting to undertake a case study to find out how, if at all, the labels imposed upon people are restrictive or even beneficial. Moreover, common problems of tension and uprising conflicts in refugee-host relations may add another burden to the hardships of refugees. Porter et al. (2008) highlights that "attitudes are hardening in many countries where the refugee problem shows little sign of abating" (Porter et al. 2008: 231). In most countries on the African continent both the refugee and host population rely on scarce resources. So, it is undisputed that "legal refugee status in most countries brings with it several advantages compared with [other] legal titles […]" (Ludwig 2013: 6). Given that and to understand the perception of the host-community, their views and opinions must be included in research as well.

2.2 Knowledge gap

Research on labelling in general is nothing new and the labelling concept as an underlying framework was already examined and the utility demonstrated (see Brun 2003, Horst 2006). In the specific refugee context, "the legal label is the core of the comprehensive institutional regime that is dealing with 'refugee' situations worldwide" (Inhetveen 2006: 126). Generally, the existing body of literature seems to focus mostly on the legal label as the predominate and most important label (see Stevens 2013, Robertson 2018). Moreover, the focus in academia seems to be centred around the experiences of labelling and adaptation to new places and homes, mostly in the Global North (see Smith 2009, Sajjad 2018) but labelling and existing legal and social labels in a refugee camp have not been examined thoroughly yet. Conversely, most people fleeing still find themselves in neighbouring countries and temporary camps or short-term solutions Accordingly, the research gap exists around the experiences, adaptation and influence of given label on displaced people in countries in the Global South. Therefore, rethinking and questioning the prevalent labels becomes very important.

2.3 Conceptual framework

The primary goal of this research is to explore the experience of a label and the challenges and benefits connected to labelling in the refugee context of the case study, Malawi. Altogether, the literature displayed is summarised and displayed in Figure 1. This illustrates that categorisation and the given legal and social labels can be positive and negative and will be translated to benefits and challenges in the conceptual framework. If those labels are negative, it might lead to "othering" and social exclusion, which could lead to conflicts. Either way, those prevalent labels have a positive or negative influence on one's identity and the perception of people. In short, the research will test the hypothesis of how labelling and the evolving positive and negative experiences affect people's identity, the perception from an outside group and their own self-perception.

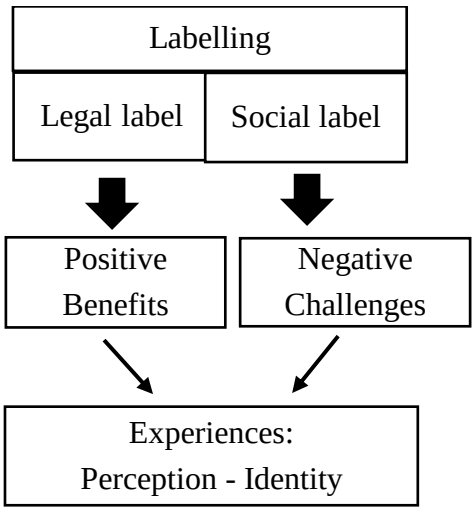

Figure 1: Conceptual Framework (own source)

2.4 Research questions

Problems connected to labelling people and generalising categories lead to an increase of stigmatisation, which leads to an increase in inequalities and problems with social integration. Furthermore, labelling can lead to forming "in" and "out" groups and exclusion. Therefore, the following research question will be answered through this study:

How do people experience the legal and social category they find themselves in and in which way are they adapting to- and living by this label in the Dzaleka Refugee Camp?

To comprehensively answer this research question, several sub-questions have been formulated:

1. What are the prevalent labels applied for people living in Dzaleka Refugee Camp by different groups/organisations?
2. How restrictive or beneficial are the categories to people's livelihoods?
3. How does labelling influence conflicts in the Dzaleka Refugee Camp?

This thesis will apply and investigate the above-mentioned assumptions in the case study of a refugee camp. There, labels can be imposed either by the government, for instance the distinction between an asylum-seeker and someone whose status was already decided, becoming a refugee. Thus, labels can also be imposed by the host-community. As the term refugee itself "has acquired a diffuse meaning in ordinary parlance" (Zolberg et al. 1989: 3), it is necessary to understand the connection between the category people find themselves in and the given label.

After explaining the underlying framework, that leads to the research questions, the following chapter will describe the geographical context, followed by the operationalisation and methods chosen and used in this research.

3 Setting the context: Geographical framework

In this section the regional context of the research area will be presented. This will contain the relevant national, regional and local context as well as the relevant processes taking place in the region. Apart from that, this section will explain the history of the research area, the geography and the current flows of migration and mobility, from the past until the present. Situated in sub-Saharan Africa, Malawi is a landlocked country between Mozambique, Tanzania and Zambia (see Figure 2).

Figure 2: Map of Malawi (UN 2012: Nr. 3858 Rev. 4)

3.1 History of Malawi

To understand Malawi's present political actions and to get an overview of its history, this chapter will display Malawi's upbringing under British influence and later protectorate of Nyasaland and the following history shortly. This covers the time between 1859 up to 1964, when Malawi became an independent nation.

Prior to the establishment of the colonial rule in 1891, Malawi went through a period of violence and change. Groups of migrants and refugees from South Africa, the so called "Ngoni" created three different states in the region (McCracken 2012: 7). This continued with the slave trade

and rule of the British. In 1953 the UK federated what was then Nyasaland with then Northern and Southern Rhodesia (now Zambia and Zimbabwe). This was widely opposed and in 1958, and Dr Hastings Kamuzu Banda led the fight against this (Commonwealth: 2019). In 1959 Banda and other members of Congress were arrested and the state of emergency was declared. After he was released in 1960, different constitutional conferences and the first elections were held, which led to the internal self-government in 1963. Malawi, free from the federation, gained independence and joined the Commonwealth in 1964, with Kamuzu Banda as the first Prime Minister (Commonwealth: 2019). Fast forward, in 1993, once proclaimed president for life in a one-party system, Hastings Kamuzu Banda, gave in on the international pressure to hold a referendum for multiparty democracy. This led to Malawi's first presidential and parliamentary elections in 1994 (Kaspin 1997: 466). Following this, numerous new parties were formed to oppose President Banda and the Malawi Congress Party. Here the divide of the regions became apparent, as the three administrative regions supported the candidate from that specific region and party – demonstrating the major tribal division of contemporary Malawi, the Tombuka, Chewa and Yao (ibid.). Thus, Malawi's population in general decanted from Bantu peasants. The social practices are seen very similar and only minor differences distinguishes them from each other.

After three decades of one-party rule, the country held multiparty presidential and parliamentary elections in 1994, under a provisional constitution that came into full effect the following year (Commonwealth: 2019). Bakili Muluzi became the first freely elected president of Malawi and got re-election in 1999, he freed political prisoners and re-established freedom of speech.

3.2 Contemporary Malawi

Malawi generally had a peaceful history and consists of a working, democratic political structure, although it remains one of the poorest countries in the world, with one of the fastest growing populations (Selin 2016: 3). The estimated population of Malawi is 18 million, 45.1% of the total population is under 15 years old and the life expectancy at birth stands at 64.2 years (World Bank: 2019). The poverty rate lies national at about 50%, but extreme poverty decreased from about 25% in 2011 to about 20% in 2017 (World Bank: 2019). Poverty in Malawi is caused by "poor performance of the agriculture sector, volatile economic growth, population growth, and limited opportunities in non-farm activities" (ibid.). So, Malawi's industry is limited, major exports include for instance tea, coffee, sugar, and tobacco.

On that account, most Malawians nowadays rely on subsistence farming. Due to climate change, population growth, increasing pressure on agricultural lands, the food supply situation is precarious. Moreover, the scourge of HIV/AIDS and the ongoing corruption on every administrative level pose major problems for Malawi (Commonwealth: 2019). After the death of President Mutharika in 2012 and the devaluation of the currency Malawi Kwatcha by his successor Joyce Banda, the Kwatcha has now been stable under since the election in 2014 and the rule of Peter Mutharika, late President Mutharika's brother. Despite Malawi's economic limitations, it currently hosts close to 40,000 refugees (Selin 2016: 3).

3.3 Malawi's refugee policies

In the past two decades, Malawi has seen an increased number of immigrants largely from Mozambique, Somalia, Ethiopia, Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), Burundi, Rwanda and Sudan, with Mozambique being the largest generator of immigrants who relocated themselves in different countries within the region as refugees until the late 1990s. Presently, most of the immigrants originate from the Great Lakes region. While most of the immigrants are legally located in the country, there has been an increased number of immigrants who locate themselves illegally without due documents (Nkhoma 2012: 29).

Because of the history of political repression within Malawi, there are real limitations to the protection and services provided by the nation-state to refugees within its borders. This is evidenced by Malawi entering nine reservations to the 1951 Refugee Convention and the enforcement of encampment policies in its 1989 Refugee Act. Therefore, Malawi's policies around the camp is problematic, because they regulate movement, integration and the right to employment of refugees. Therefore, opportunities to earn a living are very limited and most refugees are completely reliant on food aid by agencies such as World Food Program (WFP) and other external assistance (UNHCR: 2018).

3.4 Dzaleka Refugee Camp

In 1985, Malawi hosted around 1.2 million Mozambican refugees fleeing the start of the civil war. Due to the huge amount of people seeking asylum, the former political prison "Dzaleka",

meaning “never again” in the local language Chichewa, was converted into a Refugee Camp. Prior to the refugee camp, the Dzaleka facility had served for around 6000 inmates. It is located in the Dowa district, around 50 kilometres away from Lilongwe, the capital city. Dzaleka was converted and planned to accommodate around 10.000 refugees. Contemporary Dzaleka holds about 37.000 people (Ghelli 2017: UNHCR). After a successful repatriation of the Mozambican refugees, Malawi continues to host refugees, currently mainly from the Great Lakes Region like the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC), Rwanda and Burundi. Additionally, Malawi is also a major transit route for migrants, mainly young males from Somalia and Ethiopia, intending to reach South Africa, (WFP/UNHCR/GOM 2012: 11).

Figure 3: Refugees and asylum-seekers entering Malawi (own source)

Possible so called “durable solutions” are voluntary repatriation, resettlement and local integration (UNHCRb: 2019). In the case of Malawi, local integration is prohibited and only very limited countries in the Global North, like the US and Australia provide resettlement as a legal migration route for a small number of refugees. Hereby people without the official refugee status are excluded from applying independently for asylum (Koser 2007: 235).

A significant proportion of people in the camp find themselves in protracted situations, this means they have been in the camp for a minimum of five to ten years - or more (WFP/UNHCR/GOM 2012: 16). In Malawi, the Refugee Status Determination (RSD) is administered by the Ministry of Home Affairs, with technical and financial support from UNHCR. In 2012, approximately 41% of the total population was recognised as belonging to the legal category “refugee”, while the remainder consists of asylum seekers at various stages of the RSD process.

To register there is a transit facility at the city of Karonga in the northern part of Malawi, bordering Tanzania. At this station, basic biodata of new arrivals is collected. This information is transmitted to the camp for subsequent status determination and electronic registration in the Pro-Gres system, which is a "comprehensive database with possibilities for the individual and continuous registration of beneficiaries", managed by UNHCR (WFP/UNHCR/GOM 2012: 17). UNHCR's role in registration is dependent on the individual country of operation. In most cases the government oversees registration, whereas in other countries, UNHCR might assist the governments or even be fully in charge of it (UNHCR 2013: online source). Once properly registered, all families are issued with family ration cards, which are later replaced with refugee ID cards when they have been granted refugee status. Another important factor to highlight; Dzaleka is becoming increasingly congested.

Picture 2: Street at Dzaleka in Zone 2 (own source)

It has now nine different "zones" where people live, comparable to neighbourhoods. Yet, people are not allowed to choose freely where they want to live. The camp administration adjusts the space and provides people with plots. This leads to a dense variety of nationalities in small compounds.

Now that the regional context is given and the methods have been explained, the underlying framework for this research is constructed. The following chapter will therefore explain the methods used and challenges that were encountered through thirteen weeks of fieldwork at Dzaleka Refugee Camp.

4 Methodology

In the following chapter, the methodology and research design used in this thesis will be explained. Moreover, the selection and recruitment methods of the interview participants will be established. To conduct research and answer the above distinguished research questions, the analysis is based on results of a research project conducted with Utrecht University, the Netherlands. The primary data and most of the empiric material were collected during a field research between February and May 2019 at Dzaleka Refugee Camp in Malawi.

4.1 Operationalisation

It is an important step to operationalise the variables based on the presented concepts within the theoretical and conceptual framework. This enables the further data collection and analysis to be measurable, clearly structured and clarified just as it allows the research questions to be answered comprehensively later.

Concept	Dimensions	Indicators	Measurements
Labelling	Different levels of labelling	Legal label	Status | Importance of status | Reasons to register
		Social label	Names given | Sense of belonging to certain groups | Daily activities
		Exclusion	Social integration | Employment | Voluntary work | Conflicts
	Experiences	Benefits & Challenges	Importance of status | Preferential treatment | Disadvantage
		Identity	Definition of a refugee fleeing | Self-description | Self-restriction
		Adaptation	Change in behaviour | Reasons | Neighbourhood | Feeling safe |

Table 1: Operationalisation of Variables (own source)

This operationalisation allows to measure the realities on the ground in connection to the above presented theories. The defined variables built the foundation for the questions asked and were incorporated using the methods presented in the following section.

4.2 Sampling and recruitment strategy

After arriving in Malawi and seeing the research site for the first time, it became clear that the camp is very different from how it is pictured in the literature and online sources. The camp is, against all expectations, very accessible and open. The surrounding community uses the camp daily for trading, leisure activities, school facilities and other services. Once familiar with the research site and after getting used to the people and vice versa, a meeting with the camp management was arranged and translators were found.

Because of the size of the camp and the limited accessibility due to language barriers, a chain referral sampling or snowball sampling method has been used (Hennink/Hutter/Bailey 2011: 100). In this method, a gate-keeper, who functioned as a translator as well, has helped recruit participants. Using social and informal networks, people were found who volunteered to contribute to the study (Hennink/Hutter/Bailey 2011: 99). This method has helped the researcher get access to participants easily and provided the chance to include certain groups that are more marginalised and in general not accessible otherwise. After this, a purposive method was used to target more underrepresented and marginalised groups.

4.3 Survey

After adjusting to the research site, a questionnaire survey was conducted first, to reach a high and diverse number of participants and to get an insight into the different topics and opinions on a larger scale. The survey was conducted as the first step, to find out about the overall and underlying opinions and perceptions connected to labelling. It was very easy to find participants as several organisations working in the camp have been very helpful with providing access to people, they work with like UNHCR, CARD International, and other CBOs. Once the interviews have been pre-tested and some of the questions due to cultural misunderstanding and clarity were changed, the surveys and interviews were conducted in people's houses. It turned out that some of the questions were very sensitive and reminded people of the struggles they have been through. It seemed like people's homes gave them the safety to talk more openly and freely about their feelings and emotions. Unfortunately, the survey was too time consuming. After conducting 23 surveys (see Table 2), we realised that the answers we were getting did not differ from the answers given in the interviews. The interview rather gave us the chance to ask more in-depth questions.

	Origin	*Age*	*Gender*	*Status*
1.	DRC	24	Female	Refugee
2.	DRC	52	Female	Refugee
3.	DRC	41	Female	Refugee
4.	DRC	28	Female	Refugee
5.	DRC	22	Female	Refugee
6.	DRC	24	Female	Refugee
7.	DRC	22	Female	Refugee
8.	DRC	22	Male	Refugee
9.	DRC	26	Male	Asylum-seeker
10.	DRC	22	Male	Refugee
11.	DRC	38	Male	Refugee
12.	DRC	21	Male	Asylum-seeker
13.	DRC	22	Male	Asylum-seeker
14.	DRC	28	Male	Refugee
15.	DRC	23	Male	Refugee
16.	DRC	26	Male	Refugee
17.	DRC	23	Male	Refugee
18.	DRC	24	Male	Refugee
19.	DRC	18	Male	Refugee
20.	DRC	16	Male	Refugee
21.	Burundi	58	Female	Asylum-seeker
22.	Burundi	21	Male	Asylum-seeker
23.	Burundi	37	Male	Refugee

Table 2: List of survey participants – camp residents

Limitations of the survey include the fact that some participants were not willing to be surveyed or they did not have the ability to attend scheduled interviews for a variety of reasons. Further, some had problem in understanding the questions; language barriers and cultural misunderstandings may explain this. After the first weeks the survey was dismissed.

4.4 In-depth interviews

After realising that interviews were a more adequate method to conduct research in the field, semi-structured in-depth interviews were used. The semi-structured in-depth interviews have been very useful in this study. In comparison to other forms of interviews, the level of probing

and the sequence of question were limited. These interviews enabled the researcher to get an insight into the socio-cultural context of people's lives. It was central to pose the question as open-ended as possible, to encourage people to narrate about their personal experiences. Un-structured interviews have allowed participants to talk about their own story, in their own words and pace.

Since the research employed snowball sampling, most of the participants volunteered for the research and some were directly targeted and asked to do an interview by the translator (see Table 3).

	Origin	*Age*	*Gender*	*Status*
1.	DRC	15	Male	Refugee
2.	DRC	20	Male	Refugee
3.	DRC	21	Male	Asylum-seeker
4.	DRC	22	Male	Refugee
5.	DRC	23	Male	Refugee
6.	DRC	25	Male	Refugee
7.	DRC	29	Male	Asylum-seeker
8.	DRC	29	Male	Asylum-seeker
9.	DRC	43	Male	Refugee
10.	DRC	54	Male	Refugee
11.	DRC	64	Male	Refugee
12.	DRC	15	Female	Refugee
13.	DRC	17	Female	Asylum-seeker
14.	DRC	20	Female	Refugee
15.	DRC	24	Female	Refugee
16.	DRC	33	Female	Asylum-seeker
17.	DRC	55	Female	Refugee
18.	Rwanda	18	Female	Refugee
19.	Rwanda	18	Female	Refugee
20.	Rwanda	22	Female	Refugee
21.	Rwanda	37	Female	Asylum-seeker
22.	Rwanda	53	Female	Refugee
23.	Rwanda	79	Female	Asylum-seeker
24.	Rwanda	24	Male	Refugee
25.	Rwanda	27	Male	Refugee
26.	Rwanda	49	Male	Final-reject
27.	Rwanda	68	Male	Reject

28.	Rwanda	69	Male	Asylum-seeker
29.	Burundi	16	Female	Asylum-seeker
30.	Burundi	18	Female	Refugee
31.	Burundi	18	Female	Asylum-seeker
32.	Burundi	45	Female	Refugee
33.	Burundi	47	Female	Refugee
34.	Burundi	71	Female	Refugee
35.	Burundi	50	Female	Refugee
36.	Burundi	23	Male	Refugee
37.	Burundi	42	Male	Refugee
38.	Burundi	51	Male	Refugee
39.	Somalia	27	Male	Asylum-seeker
40.	Somalia	24	Male	Refugee
41.	Somalia	16	Male	Refugee
42.	Somalia	28	Male	Asylum-seeker
43.	Somalia	21	Female	Refugee
44.	Ethiopia	39	Male	Asylum-seeker
45.	Ethiopia	27	Male	Refugee
46.	Ethiopia	26	Male	Asylum-seeker

Table 3: List of interview participants – Camp residents

After the first weeks it became apparent that certain groups were under-represented. To get a better sample, a purposive method was used. Therefore, my translator and I started to seek out and target those under-represented groups specifically, to represent the camp population properly. To adequately reflect the camp population, and to add a gender-lens to the research, I have tried to speak to the same amount of male and female camp residents. This decision was made on the premise, that male and female persons living in the camp face different challenges, have a different stating in society and therefore, face different labels and adapt to those in different ways. The gender ratio is approximately 17000 females to 20000 males living in the camp.

Having interviewed people from the local community surrounding the refugee camp, I gathered an idea of their views on the camp and the opportunities and limitations the camp had on their lives. I could get an insight into the positive and negative aspects of living close to a refugee camp. Everyone seemed very interested in my work and were willing to talk about the influence

the camp has had on their lives and the labels used in the refugee context. Participants are listed in table 4.

	Origin	*Age*	*Gender*
1.	Malawi	24	Male
2.	Malawi	25	Male
3.	Malawi	27	Male
4.	Malawi	28	Male
5.	Malawi	44	Male
6.	Malawi	60	Male
7.	Malawi	41	Female
8.	Malawi	18	Female
9.	Malawi	19	Female
10.	Malawi	20	Female
11.	Malawi	39	Female
12.	Malawi	58	Female
13.	Malawi	72	Female

Table 4: List of interview participants – Local population

Moreover, almost all the NGOs working in the camp were interviewed. This helped to understand their work, broaden my view on the camp and get to know their perception on the refugees and the labels and categories used in an institutional setting. These participants are listed in table 4. Those interviews will later be used as background information, with the participants functioning as key informant interviewees.

	Organisation	*Origin*	*Gender*
1.	Card – NGO	Malawi	Female
2.	Card - NGO	Malawi	Male
3.	Plan-Malawi - NGO	Malawi	Male
4.	Camp Management - GO	Malawi	Male
5.	Welthungerhilfe – NGO	Malawi	Male
6.	There is Hope – NGO	Malawi	Male
7.	There is Hope – NGO	Burundi	Male
8.	UNHCR	Malawi	Male
9.	RSD – GO	Malawi	Female

Table 5: List of interview participants - Organisations

The different organisations (see Table 5) gave me very valuable insights into their work and especially the different means taken to help people from different countries, which will be explained further in the analysis part of this report.

4.5 Focus-group discussions

To address and discuss the several topics mentioned in the individual interviews, different focus group discussions have been conducted to further identify the range of opinions of people living inside the camp. It is important to understand the communities' norms and values connected to categorisation and the effect this has on people's lives. The group setting gave room for discussion and exchange of experiences connected to labelling. Furthermore, the group discussions have provided the opportunity to explore the potential conflicts in the camp.
The first focus group discussion was held at an English learners' class, without any influence or choosing nationalities or age, neither was there an influence of the number of people that attended.

	Origin	*Gender*
1.	DRC	Male
2.	DRC	Male
3.	DRC	Male
4.	DRC	Male
5.	DRC	Male
6.	DRC	Male
7.	DRC	Male
8.	Burundi	Male
9.	DRC	Female
10.	DRC	Female
11.	Rwanda	Female

Table 6: List of participants - first focus group discussion

The questions surrounded labels the participants were facing individually, and the labels faced due to their origin. Plus, the focus group was asked to discuss the categories they face as a group altogether. Participants were also asked to state, accuse, defend and question the labels

used in the Dzaleka Refugee context. Furthermore, the existing conflicts were discussed as well.

After conducting the first focus group without having influence on origin and number of participants, another focus group discussion was conducted with different people. Firstly, to balance the country of origin, gender, amount of people and second, to identify patterns and differences in the statements.

	Origin	*Gender*
1.	Rwanda	Female
2.	Burundi	Female
3.	DRC	Female
4.	DRC	Male
5.	DRC	Male
6.	Somalia	Male

Table 7: List of participants - second focus group discussion

But, as the focus of this research is about seeking individual experiences, which are hard to discuss in a group setting, the focus of the analysis will be on the in-depth interviews that were conducted first. Limitations of the focus-groups were also prevalent. Due to the mix in nationalities, some mentioned issues were challenged, people faced insults or mentioned labels which were dismissed by other participants. Yet, the labels did not differ from the encountered labels in the interviews.

4.6 Participatory observation

Additionally, participatory observation was used to observe how people act and interact in different social situations and to understand their culturally given practices and meanings. To take part in people's everyday life at Dzaleka different empowerment groups like the girl-youth-empowerment, a teen-mothers group and a poetry and arts club were attended almost on a weekly basis. This helped to establish a connection with the community living in Dzaleka. Moreover, rapport was established with people from the local community, because of the living situation at Tikondwe Freedom Gardens, a large farm in a village of the host community. There, helping with daily activities led to a better understanding of the lives of people and friendships were built, which gave the opportunity to talk about thoughts on the camp. This also enabled to

ask more personal and critical questions about the camp and the people living there. As participatory observation can have a variety of methods, in this study it is restrained to unstructured conversations, notes and illustrative material.

4.7 Secondary data collection

To enhance and enrich this thesis and the conducted research, not only primary data but also secondary data will be evaluated and used. Here, careful evaluation criteria must be ensured, as the data will be used to cross-validate the results of the primary data analysis. It is important to consider the source of information as well as the quality. In this research, secondary data will be used of governmental organisations that ensure transparent and trustworthy methods and collection. Additionally, literature and data provided by public agencies and non-governmental organisations will be considered as well. The secondary data was collected before, during and after the fieldwork by searching databases like Google Scholar and the University Library Utrecht. During the fieldwork provided material from several governmental institutions and non-governmental institutions in the camp was collected. Examples are the UNHCR, the Refugee Status Determination (RSD) and NGOs such as Jesuit Refugee Service (JRS) and Churches Action in Relief and Development (CARD). After the fieldwork, more online sources were examined to compare the findings.

In the following chapter, a reflection of the fieldwork will be explained. Special attention will be payed to the researcher's positionality and its affect on the findings and research itself. Additionally, limitations and challenges as well as the relations mainlined in the field will be displayed. Here, personal experience and individual understandings will be implied to give an insight into the underlying research and connected work of this thesis.

5 Reflecting on the fieldwork

This chapter will focus on a reflection of the thirteen weeks fieldwork. Hereby, the positionality of the researcher, the challenges and limitations as well as the relationships in the field will be discussed and presented. It will also be examined, if those have an influence on the data collection. Personal experiences, thoughts and opinions will be included in the following as well.

5.1 Positionality

The fieldwork and research in Malawi gave me the chance to understand the dynamics of a refugee camp in a special political setting – a protracted refugee situation. As Malawi follows the encampment policies, the people living in the camp are very limited on their ability to move around and are not allowed to work. Nonetheless, people living in the camp are active members of a community, and I had countless opportunities to meet people, who are highly motivated to picture the camp in a different way. "Salama Africa", "the Branches" and other Community Based Organisations are working hard daily to give hope and chances to the youth in the camp by providing a place for them to explore their talents, mostly connected to poetry, art and drama. Apart from that, the people in the camp have met me with incredible hospitality and ensured that I always felt safe and comfortable. The dedication to change the narrative of the Dzaleka Camp has had a tremendous impact on me and my learning process in my research as well as my thoughts about refugees and people in protracted refugee situations. Despite all their challenges, numerous people put all their heart into education and youth, and to open up Dzaleka to visitors, students and researchers like me alike.

As a white, young female in a refugee camp I have had tremendous learning moments during my research. First and furthermost it made me realise and be aware of the privilege people from countries in the Global North have. I could gain access to all the organisations working in the camp easily and people have been very interested in me and my work. A generous number of people have shared their personal stories with me, explaining their struggles while still maintaining an incredible will for a better life. It was an intense learning process to find a way to handle the emotional and psychological pressure and challenges we were facing in the camp.

5.2 Limitations and challenges

Dealing with the emotional and psychological challenges has been a considerable factor influencing the research, due to its high sensitivity, nature and setting, where people's private and personal life stories were shared in the interviews. The struggles and trauma they had to go through and the horror that they had to face that led to them fleeing their original country. When the reasons and causes of them fleeing came up in the interviews, I did not feel skilled and trained enough to react appropriately. Nor did I know how to lead from one question to another when the answers were as disturbing as some have been, due to the horrible stories almost everyone living at Dzaleka call their past. The difficulty of my research was sometimes the struggle to lead the interview and probe according to the question when I was still processing what the people have shared in the previous question. Sometimes, the answers were so troubling and upsetting, I had problems concentrating on the next question.

Apart from that, I have faced several other challenges during my time in Malawi. The immense challenge hereby was the expectations people put on me as a researcher. Some people have asked for money or help to change their lives. I found it hard to explain that my research is first and furthermost for my personal interest and my thesis. The information people are sharing with me will be handed to the Malawian government, yet it will most certainly not lead to significant change for people's individual lives. Explaining this repeatedly has been a challenge too and had an influence on my research. People long for change and sometimes seem disappointed that I will not be able to help them directly with my research, and word spreads. Some participants were not willing to talk to me because they have heard that there will not be a direct change or benefit to their lives in the short term. As those questions in general have mostly been raised at the end of the interviews, it did not have an influence on the data collection per se, but it might have an influence on the motivations why people decide to talk to me or kept people from talking to me.

Another challenge was the language barrier I was facing in the camp. As some people do not speak English and I only speak very limited French, I needed a translator for most of the interviews. This could lead to translation problems and sometimes the answered could be biased due to the translation and interpretation of the spoken words.

Because validity and reliability are key aspects of any research it is important to reflect on the measures taken to ensure them. As my own positionality, the translator, the participants, the social context as well as the methods used can have an influence on these, I tried to make sure to increase the validity and reliability with various measures. Thus, it seems hard to re-test my

findings with the same participants and to overcome the issue of talking to people from the "elite", referring to articulated or better educated people, I have tried to vary my findings through conducting interviews with different people. I focussed on including people from different genders, different age cohorts, social classes, some considered "rich" in the camp and more marginalised groups, like teen-mothers, people on the lower end of the economic spectrum as well as various people with different disabilities. Moreover, I have conducted interviews alone, without my translator when people were able to speak English to find out if the answers would differ with his presence. Additionally, the translators that were recommended to us by the authorities were all male and my team of researchers were all female. It was therefore not possible to find out if his or my gender had an influence on the research. On this notion it is also important to reflect on the bias participants might have. Some informants might want to make things seem worse than they are when they expect me to help them. Additionally, participants might want to please me with their answers, conversely, they might also be afraid giving negative answers or are unwilling and withhold answers. To increase validity, I have tried to be very clear about the research, the use of data, building rapport and keeping detailed fieldnotes. My fellow students and I have also been frequently exchanging findings to compare and reassure them and to make sure we have the same overall understanding of different settings of the camp. Cross- checks with data and information provided by organisations working in the camp has also helped to ensure reliability.

After conducting research for some time, I had noticed that, although a change of some questions has been made, answers occur repeatedly and less, and less new information emerged. I am aware that I only spoke to a limited number of participants, so I am trying not to make false assumptions. To ensure valid findings, I have tried to speak to as many people as possible, but limited time and resources were a substantial challenge. Yet, through triangulation, meaning the use of different data sources, research methods and investigations, I was able to gain more confidence in my data. The combination of surveying, interviewing, observing, informal conversation and focus groups helped me to verify my data.

5.3 Relations in the field

Overall, the relations maintained in the field have changed over time. As my translator is my age and a very active member of the community in Dzaleka, he has invited me to several events where we maintained an informal relationship, learning from each other and having an active

exchange about different cultural contexts. He helped me to understand and adjust to the daily life in Dzaleka and behave appropriately, especially in terms of invitations, general offerings and greetings. This has had a positive influence on the research as it made me more aware of the cultural differences and accurately responses. He has been able to access and mobilise a very broad variety of people, including more marginalised groups, which was very helpful in properly representing the camp population in the sample.

Moreover, as we are located just outside of the camp, the accessibility of the research site has been very good. I was able to meet participants at their preferred time and place, which gave me the freedom to find the time and space to interview people. It has been a very rewarding experience to explore Dzaleka as a very open and accessible place where we, apart from working hours, also spend our free time, especially because refugee camps are often pictured as secluded, dangerous spaces, which Dzaleka is most certainly not.

6 Findings

In this chapter, the results of thirteen weeks fieldwork at the Dzaleka Refugee Camp will be discussed. The findings are established to follow the conceptual framework established in Chapter 2.3, based on the underlying literature explained in Chapter 2.1. Due to the coherent nature of research questions and framework, the findings will be orientated on the framework. This then leads to the discussion, where the research questions will be answered elaborately. Due to the interviews taken with various people[4] living in and around the Dzaleka Refugee Camp, the analysis traces that the conflicts and imposed labelling can be divided into four different categories. Figure 4 defines the four different categories of mentioned labels the findings will be separated in.

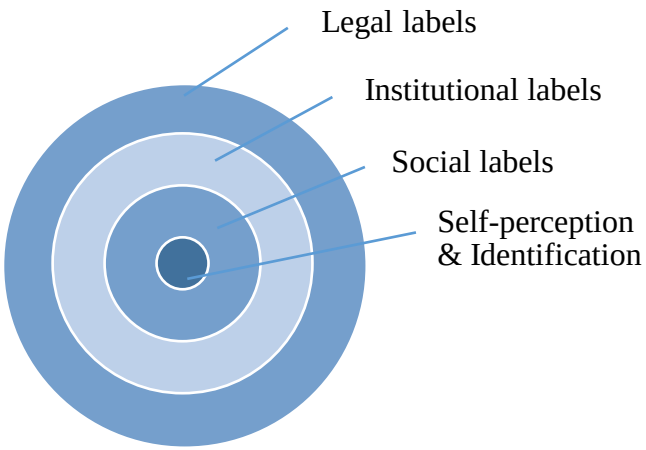

Figure 4: Four distinguished categories of labels used in the refugee context of Malawi (own source)

First, on the outer circle in Figure 4, the legal labels inside the Dzaleka Refugee Camp will be displayed. These are given on a state level and people receive those labels irrespective of their behaviour, and the ones given cannot be changed. This has also been stated in the literature displayed in Chapter 2. Legal labels and the analysis of them have been found and extracted in several other studies, but these labels differ fundamentally from the labels imposed on an institutional level, for example by organisations working in the camp. The second circle in Figure 4 and the connected labels to this category of institutional labels is characterised by and dependent on the sentimental value and the attitude of the organisations and its employees. This has not yet been reviewed in the existing body of literature about labelling in the refugee context in the Global South. The labelling on the institutional level has been a finding explained and

[4] All names used in this Thesis have been changed to maintain confidentiality.

emerged from the various interviews taken. Next, the described social labels shall be examined. While conducting research it became apparent that legal and social labels are very different from one another and have different influences on people's lives. Those labels are also imposed by a different set of people, this has also been dealt with in the literature outlining Chapter 2. On the legal and institutional level, a certain dependence of the labelled person exists, but the social labels are given by people from the same community or the local population.
Following, the identification with the labels and the influence of those on how people are perceived and how they perceive themselves will be shown. This is displayed in the inner circle of Figure 4. All other categories of labels have an influence on one's identity and perception. Yet, the labels in all categories tend to generalise people due to certain features and attributes. Nevertheless, they can be both beneficial and detrimental for people living at Dzaleka. Positive labels may lead to positive experiences and expectations and have a positive outcome on the labelled person's life. Consequently, negative labels might lead to negative outcomes on the labels person's life, like conflicts and problems, stigmatisation and other above-mentioned issues.

6.1 Legal labels – on the status of refugees and asylum-seekers

In Malawi, the executive institution for legal labels in the refugee context is the Refugee Status Determination (RSD), a governmental organisation at Dzaleka. Once a person who is forced to flee arrives either at the registering border in the North of Malawi, Karonga, or is a so called "spontaneous arrival" in the camp, they first register with the government. In the camp this is done at the camp management office. Then, after finishing the registration at the camp management office, people need to register at UNHCR. After registering and general bio-data collection through the camp management and UNHCR, an interview is done with UNHCR. After this the RSD Unit, the governmental unit, conducts a second interview, the status determination interview. The RSD Unit is, just as the camp management, a governmental institution, but at a different stage of governmental registering. Therefore, technically a two-step government registration is necessary in Malawi. First, the registration after arrival, second, the interview conducted with the RSD Unit. Here, applicants have the chance to explain and share their story, unlike at the camp management where they only register and share their basic bio-data. So, a so-called parallel registration system between government and UNHCR has been implemented

at Dzaleka, as stated by a representative of RSD (female RSD representative: 2019). The government does a manual registration at the point of entry. Those manual records will be shared with UNHCR which, as already mentioned in chapter 5, implements the data input into the PRO-Gres system. In this case study, Malawi, the government has a backlog of applicants for the registration process. Currently RSD is working on applications as far back as 2016 (female RSD representative: 2019). The reason for that is on the one hand the lacking capacity; previously there were only 6 people working at RSD Unit Dzaleka. This number has recently been increased to 10 staff members. The final status decision is made by a refugee committee consisting of about 10 senior-officials from government, from different ministries, and it is chaired by the chief secretary to the president (ibid.). This committee does not meet regularly. When asked, the RSD representative said that

> *"we are trying to push that they [the committee] meet regularly, before they would meet maybe 1-2 times a year but now, they meet every 4 months".*

The number of applications that are dealt with per year depends on several factors said the RSD representative. First, on *"how much work we have done here at the unit"*, second on how many people are working at the unit as explained before. On the last committee meeting in December 2018

> *"they [the committee] decided over 1144 cases. So, that is about 3500 individuals per year".*

Here, a decision is made about an applicant's case, with four possible outcomes. All existing labels are pictured in Figure 5.

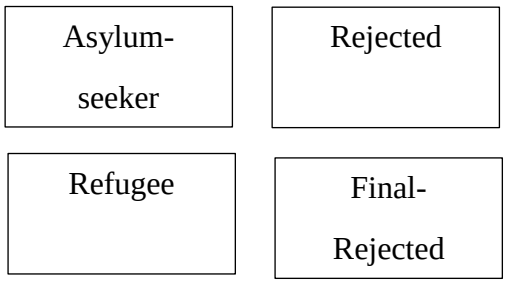

Figure 5: Existing legal labels at Dzaleka (own source)

After registering with the camp management, every person becomes an asylum-seeker. Therefore, this legal label is technically given to every person staying and taking the first step to register at Dzaleka or the registering station in the North of Malawi, Karonga. Some do not register as they only use the camp as a transit. They might want to proceed to find work in

South Africa or just not register to become a refugee. From unstructured conversations people were explaining that getting a status in a country is not good if you want to continue your journey. So, after applying and going through the interviews with UNHCR and then the RSD Unit, the committee decides if a person will get a refugee status[5], will be rejected or, if they have already been rejected and apply again will get a final reject over their case.

6.1.1 Benefits of legal labels

Some informants perceive getting the legal refugee status as positive, with positive benefits. For example, Alan, a 69-year-old man from Rwanda. In an interview he said

> *"the status is my only problem - I don't have it. I arrived here in 2003 and I did the interview, but they didn't tell me until now if I have a reject or a status. I wanted to go to UNHCR and ask and they said my papers were with the first camp management, who passed away. So, […] now I don't know, […] I didn't get an answer or anything"*.

Waiting for a status for 3-5 years or even much longer seems to be the reality of any applicant in Malawi. Camp residents without status are waiting for it and the label, as enough people think it is needed for certain opportunities. Several participants think like Mary, who claimed

> *"there is a difference, the person who has a status is accepted here. He is a true refugee. The one without status actually can't say I am a refugee, because they don't have a status. If help comes from outside, they don't get help. Third country, they don't get help. The one with status is in the first line to receive things"* (42, male, Burundi).

Due to the belief at Dzaleka that you will "only" be protected if you have a refugee status, people think their lives will be easier after receiving the status. This is contrary to what the RSD representative has said, who explained that all people registering with the government get the same amount of food and assistance. The status is only needed for resettlement options and higher education, as those are chosen by third countries themselves. Some participants seem to be aware of that, one has said that

> *"in terms of receiving things, each and every one receives the same things. But when you have a refugee status there are some benefits, if there is a country who want's refugees, you will be the one who gets that benefit and in terms of ID, an asylum-seeker cannot get an ID."* (25, male, DRC).

[5] In the context of Dzaleka and during the interviews, belonging to the legal category "refugee" is used interchangeably with "having a status".

It becomes apparent that people are not informed enough about their benefits and options when applying for a refugee status. The legal status creates groups of people who have a status and who do not. The consequence of people belonging to the category "refugee" and having a legal status is the jealousy evolving out of the status determination. Participants have said that they cannot talk about their status in front of others, especially when they got it earlier than others. This happens due to specific protection needs, like children, people with disabilities or elderly people who need to be prioritised (female RSD representative: 2019). A female participant has said:

> *"We are taking this [the status] as a secret. We have gotten our status when we were new-arrivals and some people who are here 5 or 10 years can ask why we have our status so fast and they can come and do bad things"* (female, 55, DRC).

This leads to people perceiving a disadvantage because of the legal status and the label, they find themselves exposed to. Additionally, the status has an influence on the way people live together. One participant said

> "*I have a status, so it is like an offence talking to other people and I hate to offend anyone. If I have a status and you don't, I don't have to discriminate you"* (female, 24, DRC).

6.1.2 Challenges of legal labels

Most participants stated that belonging to the category "refugee", being called and labelled a refugee makes them feel bad. This label seems to make people feel discriminated against. Like Muhamad from Somalia, who contributed

> *"I feel very sad, because when you call me by my name, or Somali, it is better than calling me a refugee. You remind me where I am, in a prison. Since even where we are now, on my side I believe we are in a prison. We cannot leave, can't do anything. When I hear refugee-camp and you call me refugee it shows me you are discriminating me."* (27, male, Somalia).

Another participant, Mary, said

> *"it wasn't our decision to move from our homes, they [other people outside the camp] just can't understand that it was war that caused us to flee, by calling us refugee it gives us pain to think about that"* (female, 18, Burundi).

Furthermore, people fear being deported back to the origin country if they do not have a status. A young female participant from Rwanda explained that her grandma, before the family got the status after being in the camp for years, never asked for help or build a livelihood because she thought she could get sent back to Rwanda any time. The girl said

> *"they [other people in the camp without a status] always had to live in fear, which affects them in their mind"* (18, female, Rwanda).

This was also stated by young Patience who was born in the camp said,

> "*I would stay in Malawi if I had the choice, but because I can't [go to] university, and I cannot move freely, I am in jail. If we had freedom to get any job in Malawi, I would stay. Here in Malawi is [my] life. [If] my name [would] not appear as a refugee I would stay [in Malawi]."* (18, female, Rwanda).

Meaning if she could escape the legal category, she finds herself in, she would like to stay in Malawi and build her livelihood there. Apparently, the legal label refugee and asylum-seekers also seem to have an influence on the camp resident's vulnerability. When the organisation CARD was asked if there are differences between refugees and asylum-seekers in the camp the response was:

> *"It is very marginal but there are differences. The most difference is in terms of vulnerability context. Most refugees are more vulnerable. Most of the asylum-seekers are not vulnerable. They are vulnerable because they are out of their countries but in terms of access to information, issues like money and other services they have normally more on hand than the refugees"* (I-CARD: 2019).

This illustrates that the legal category one finds themselves in and the country of origin has an influence on how people are viewed by different organisations.

6.2 Institutional labels – NGOs giving labels

The institutions at Dzaleka consist of different non-governmental organisations working in the camp. Mostly, the organisations seemed very aware of their wording and denied the use of labelling. As UNHCR is funding most of the NGO and even some of the GOs like the RSD, their wording has been implemented in the context of Malawi. People working for these organisations have expressed that before working the camp, they must undertake a course and training for adequate response and use of language. Despite this, labels are used to refer to specific people, as can be seen in Figure 6.

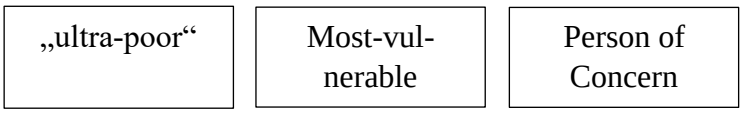

Figure 6: Existing institutional labels at Dzaleka (own source)

After registering, UNHCR is the primary organisation concerning people living inside the camp. Nevertheless, several other organisations play an important role like PLAN-International who deals with "child protection, sexual gender-based violence, human rights and the distribution section" (male representative of PLAN: 2019) or CARD (Churches Action in Relief and Development), which deals with development issues and people at risk (female CARD representative: 2019). So, every person who is a "person of concern", gets assistance and help from the organisations working in the camp.

6.2.1 Benefits of institutional labels

Technically, every person at Dzaleka being labelled a "person of concern" receives relief. This is food assistance in all cases, sometimes clothes and other valuable items as well as other social support as explained above. But, as the Dzaleka Refugee Camp is an example of a protracted refugee situation, a phenomenon so called "donor fatigue" occurred, where the Camp is still receiving people daily but as the camp has existed for 25 years, the funds are decreasing steadily. A male UNHCR representative said that:

> *"the major challenge so far in terms of food distribution is the donor fatigue. Because much as the refugee situation is an emergency, it's a protracted situation. You have refugees coming, others being resettled others have stayed here for a long time. The camp was opened in the 1990. Since that time up to now the numbers keep increasing and the situation is still not ending at the same time. So, it's protracted, and donors become tired of funding. You know supporting refugees with food rations and food assistance all the time".*

Because of that, UNHCR needs to choose people for specific interventions, as there is not enough funding and resources to include all people living in the camp. This means that UNHCR must seek out and choose individuals. UNHCR refers to the people they want to work with as the "ultra-poor" in the camp. To find these, a "vulnerability score card" was developed to examine the vulnerability status of a person to be chosen to partake in interventions. One the one hand, this label is very restrictive and negative, but on the other, it does help the labelled people

in being chosen to benefit from an intervention that addresses the improvement of lives. Therefore, labels can be restrictive but also beneficial for the individual.

As the organisations have noticed tensions between the people living in the camp and the surrounding communities, they work against the conflicts occurring due to the close boundaries of the camp. So, organisations in the camp have started actively engaging the local community in any activities done. For example, organisations like UNHCR, just as their implementing partners like CARD and the NGO There is Hope, have integrated the local community as their so called "beneficiaries" - including 40% Malawians in their activities, and 60% people living in the camp. This helps the integration and exchange says a representative of the NGO There is Hope, stating that

> *"my understanding is that since these people have accepted that they are staying with the refugees, […] it's one way of bringing these people together and there are also facing I can say the same challenges in life and to earn a living. You see, what is happening in the camp, the same thing is happening in the host community"* (male There is Hope representative: 2019).

This is not only practiced by NGOs but also by organisations like UNHCR. One representative explained that

> *"in pro-livelihood advocacy we meet community leaders within the camp and traditional leaders of the community to express the challenged that POC[6]s face in terms of agricultural production, but we also acknowledge that in the host community we have the ultra-poor. Our interventions therefore the POCs and the host community, so 60% always in any interventions are POCs, 40% are community members*" (UNHCR: 2019).

Conclusory, being labelled "vulnerable" or falling into the category of being "ultra-poor" is in general a negative label. Therefore, from the above literature overview, this should lead to either the labelled person seeing themselves negative or as having a negative influence on their lives. In the context of Malawi, neither is applicable. Yet, the negative label has a positive influence on the life of a labelled person. He or She receives benefits other, not labelled people, would not get. Additionally, this could lead to being able to take active means to work against the label as it is still a negative one. In other words, people who are labelled "vulnerable" or "ultra-poor" receive benefits that address the chance to change the category and not belonging to that label anymore. Moreover, every person in the camp in general benefits from the label

[6] POC refers to the label "people of concern", used by UNHCR and other NGOs working in the camp to refer to all people living in the Dzaleka Refugee Camp.

"person of concern" and, in addition, the local population benefits from the labels inside Dzaleka as well, as the local, Malawian population is included in assistance and provisions too.

6.2.2 Challenges of institutional labels

Hence some organisations focus on improving livelihoods, they have incorporated activities like supporting business, farming or livestock. When asked how people are chosen for those activities, the respondent, a representative of CARD, answered that people can choose freely which activity they want to partake in but there has also been a generalisation of the people and what they like to do. The respondent specifically said

> *"something we can notice among the refugees is that there are maybe their social status and what they like doing. Like we have example of people from Burundi and Rwanda in most cases they are farmers, they like farming and people from the DRC they are more into music, business and modelling."* (male CARD representative: 2019).

This was also mentioned in several unstructured conversations. Some NGOs at Dzaleka, like CARD, PLAN-Malawi and JRS, specifically chose the "most vulnerable" people. Using the official poverty level description of the "ultra-poor" helps to distinguish between those who will get help and those who will not. Here it becomes apparent that labels are important to distinguish between groups. Yet, on the institutional level, it is the only chance to find a voluntary "job" at Dzaleka and in Malawi in general. A participant has said that especially with the organisations working in the camp, people pick and choose.

This is obviously the norm in most open jobs, nevertheless some participants have said that there is a discrimination against nationalities and people who already have a voluntary job chose friends and family members instead of through a normal application phase. Katheri explained that

> "*if you apply several times and you don't get [the job], you are discouraged and think, ah these people pick and choose. When you don't have any connection to someone, you will not get a job. You cannot be accepted. This is very wrong"* (female, 24, DRC).

So, country of origin or race seem to have an influence if you get to be chosen to belong to a certain group and have opportunities or not. Likewise, the study highlights that origin and length of time spent in the camp seem to have an influence and might even restrain people from certain opportunities like volunteering and getting trained, which causes further problems in the camp. This is not only the case on the institutional level, the social labels dominant in the

camp seem to be influenced by that as well. This will be elaborated further in the following chapter.

6.3 Social labels – everyday life at Dzaleka

Dzaleka is already overpopulated. Originally planned for 5000 people, it now hosts 38000, and its rapid expansion means that space is becoming a major issue. The camp is still receiving new-arrivals daily. In the context of social labelling, labels by both, the people living in the camp as well as the people living surrounding the camp must be considered, because these play an important role in the social construction of labelling in the refugee context of Malawi.

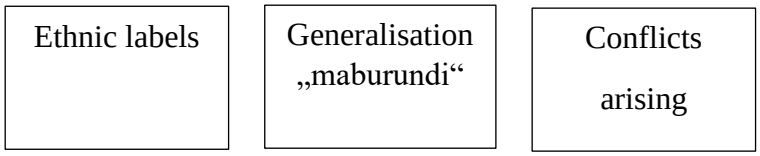

Figure 7: Existing social labels at Dzaleka (own source)

Members of the local community have expressed that the congestion of the camp has had an enormous influence on their lives. It is important to highlight again that almost all Malawians rely on subsistence farming. Therefore, fertile land and land loss is are considerable issue local people are facing.

6.3.1 Benefits of social labels

Through one's cultural and ethnic background and being a new-arrival in the camp ensures people receive help from others in the camp. Here, specific local structures have been implemented to guarantee that people get assistance directly after arriving. In the context of Malawi, so called "community leaders" are elected by every origin. Additionally, through the same sense of belonging, some participants have said that other people belonging to the same ethnic group have helped them arriving in the camp and getting used to the structures and life there.

The community leaders are technically voted by the people living in the camp, yet, if one ethnic group or regional tribe is overrepresented in the camp, it allegedly is likely that they will be receive more votes. Also, through sharing the same origin or ethnicity, some people will be more willing to help each other out than if they belong to a different ethnic group. In an unstructured conversation a young man from the DRC has said that he helps older women if they

are from the same tribe with fetching water and sometimes sharing food with them because he knows they are from the same place and his parents, who are still in the DRC, would wish that he helps them.

To understand the perception of refugees in the Malawian local context interviews were conducted with several people living in the local villages around Dzaleka. To get a better picture, people living in the Chinkhwiri village, about 2-3 kilometres away from the camp have been included. This is alongside locals and the senior chiefs of the Mengwe village, their village boundaries lie about 700 meters away from the camp. The analysis claims that the local population overall acknowledges the positive aspects the camp has had on the people and the surrounding area. Nevertheless, the negative impacts and the neglection of integration was apparent in every interview. The camp has brought economic activities into the region, and several important services are now closer to the people living around the camp. Mentioned facilities were for example the market, which provides opportunities to buy and sell agricultural produce. One young participant explained while we were plugging groundnuts on his farm that

> *"in Dzaleka there is a market for farm produce every Tuesday […] where people from all over the central region and near Lilongwe and the surrounding district go. There are vendors who come and buy farm produce and supply to other places. It is a place where our farm has benefitted a lot."* (24, male, Malawian).

He also emphasised that Dzaleka is

> *"a perfect chill spot for the youth around here and a spot where people go drinking and just go there for maybe football since they have clubs there and they play football in the weekends."*.

Furthermore, the people living in the camp have provided several job opportunities like piece work, renting out plots and business opportunities for the local community as the people living in the camp provide these. One local farmer said that

> *"refugees rent our farming places along the valleys and the open fields, they plant vegetables, maize and tomatoes. Most of the refugees who are doing well are selling their farming products and then they find their capital out of farming, especially tomatoes in the rainy season."* (58, female, Malawian).

To conclude, the local community seems to see a positive influence of the camp on their personal lives as well as the area they live in, due to the market, hospital and job opportunities.

6.3.2 Challenges of social labels

Whilst different cultures and misunderstandings can lead to conflicts in the camp, the various interviews with people living there revealed that most conflicts and connected labelling and categorisation within the Dzaleka Refugee Camp are originated in conflicts being brought with from people's origin countries. As the social labels were mentioned as different factors and more restraining than the other above-mentioned labels, the challenges and negative perception of social labels will be separated to simplify the presentment.

First, ethnic labels will therefore be examined on its own in the following section. The most mentioned problem connected to social labelling the people in the camp are facing are mainly labels imposed onto them by Malawians. This is a result of the extremely embedded location of the camp. As the camp has been expanding rapidly over the last years, the local community lives very close to the camp, technically having their plots and houses right next to each other. Here, the mentioned labels differ from the ones the people living in the camp were saying and the ones the local population has stated. This leads to the second social label, the generalisation of the social label "maburundi", which will also be explained more in depth in the following sections.

6.3.2.1 Ethnic labels

Mentioned labels inside the Camp were mostly connected to the conflicts occurring in the great Lakes Region and have different reasons displayed in Figure 8. On the one hand, the ethnic affinity and culture just as the tribalism have an influence on the ethnic labels. On the other hand, in certain countries like the DRC, the pollical affiliation and belonging to rebel groups and the militia shape your perception of yourself and others.

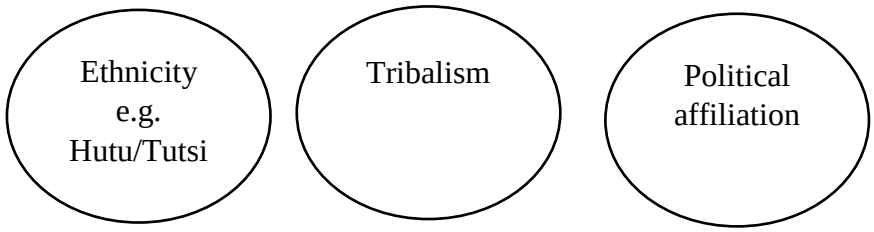

Figure 8: List of reasons for Ethnic Labels (own source)

This is also stated in the interview with Lio from the DRC, who got to Dzaleka with his family. He says

"these things used to happen here, the conflicts from the country. These are Burundian, these are Rwandan these are Congolese, they are Hutu, these are Tutsi – all the conflicts in our country are happening here" (43, male, DRC).

Emphasising that, another participant said, *"being a Burundian is hard, we left for political reasons and those continue in the camp."* (21, male, Burundi). With that they both refer to the ethnic conflict between "Tutsi" and "Hutu" in Burundi and Rwanda. Additionally, the same was witnessed with the tribal and political conflicts in the DRC. Emmanuel from the DRC explained that:

"[…] all people are Congolese, but they are from the different regions, like the east and south. Each part from the DRC have a common name you would use to explain. And the conflicts from home come up then. The people from south and west are saying people from the east are not real Congolese. The tribal problems." (43 male, DRC).

So, not only the ethnic conflicts in Burundi and Rwanda, but also the ethnic conflicts between different tribes in the DRC have been a source for conflict and a reason behind labels inside the camp. The ethnic disagreements affect the labels used and can restrict people from accessing resources in the camp including the boreholes[7] and food distribution. The limited resources and where they are provided represent a space where people from different nationalities meet, competing for one resource. For example, there are only about 20 boreholes for the whole camp population. In public spaces, the labels become more apparent says Martha:

"most of the people that make us feel bad is when we are at the Borehole, the Congolese people call us Burundi, Burundi" (50, female, Burundi).

The discrimination of Burundians by Congolese also points out the conflicts overlapping state borders. One man explained his family and me, as an observer, that the countries Rwanda, Burundi the DRC and Uganda had numerous different wars. First, the genocide in Rwanda and Burundi and

"these struggles came to the Congo and now, as we are coming here these conflicts of our countries came back here to the camp. But the difference is that, even though we had war in our country, we have to change it here." (43 male, DRC).

He also added that all the people in the camp are refugees. He wants to change this perception and thought his children that

"we have the problems in our heart, but we try to say okay, we are all refugees, but we can be a family, we can be together here, we are forcing ourselves to forget the conflict.

[7] A deep, narrow hole in the ground to locate and access water. Through a pumping system, people living in the camp can access groundwater.

Normally, to forgive someone doesn't mean we forget the problems. We are obliged to forgive, but we will not forget." (ibid.).

Whilst some people living in the camp want to change the narrative and culture, they have learned by ending the vicious circle of discrimination and hate, the labels used in the refugee context of Dzaleka seem to have an influence on the perception of different nationalities in the camp. Participants have mentioned that Congolese people were being preferred for special opportunities, because of the on-going war in the DRC, one participant said,

"there is a small difference between Congolese, Burundian and Rwandan because Congolese are more prioritised because there is war until today." (25, male, DRC).

Due to what seems the overall perception that some nationalities are prioritised, they face discrimination. Violet has mentioned,

"between us refugees there is war and sometimes the Burundian and Rwandans tell us we can't fetch water because we are from Congo and we get more and better opportunities to be resettled, so at the borehole there are problems." (41, female, DRC).

6.3.2.2 Generalisation by Malawians - *maburundi*

Participants have mentioned that the vast discrimination they are experiencing is about the generalisation of all people in the Camp by Malawians. This is displayed in Malawians labelling all people in the camp *"maburundi",* which refers to people coming from Burundi, a country of origin, in the local language Chichewa. This became the norm as Rwandans and Burundians were the first refugees in Malawi in 1993 and 1994. Thus, the meaning of the label changed over time as it now refers to a refugee and any other non-white foreigner. This label is negatively connotated, like most participants have said. They were telling me that

"the discrimination is from Malawians by calling us "Maburundi". Normally the word generalises all the refugees. This means, all the people, whether you are from DRC, Rwanda, all are Burundi. It's calling all people foreigners" (20, female, DRC).

People are confronted with the label often, mostly when visiting the surrounding villages or the nearby town. One other participant has said that

"if you go out the camp you will always find Malawians who will call us "Maburundi". (male, 27, Rwanda).

This participant also explained that apart from the discrimination itself, a problem connected to this label is that

"maybe this group has conflicts with Burundians so it's something not good to call them Burundians. That person calling them the name of the people they hate." (ibid.).

Being constantly called a nationality you are not and having cultural disconnections to that nationalities causes problems for many. Moreover, participants emphasised that

> *"they [Malawians] don't consider us as people and have no respect. They are negative towards us."* (26, male, DRC).

To highlight the discriminative nature of the term again, Jaki explained that he would rather be called a foreigner, because

> *"if they call you foreigner you can be lucky, if they call you maburundi it's horrible. A lot of xenophobia. They think there is a difference between us and them, because they don't get things for free*." (22, male, DRC).

Jaki also emphasised another important point. Due to the bad economy and other influential factors, the majority of Malawians live in similar or higher levels of poverty than the people in the camp. Therefore, some Malawians do not understand, why the people in the camp would get "things for free", assistance and support, when they also face challenges.

From the participant observation conducted while living on a local farm it became apparent that the local community are not educated and informed enough about the people living in the camp. When asked about the reasons why people flee in casual conversations, a considerable number of locals seem to think that the will for a better life makes people flee to Dzaleka and Malawi. Also, the countries of origin do not seem to be known by the local population, only the ones frequently going to the camp or having social networks there are more aware of the situation and the reasons. In unstructured conversations when asking about the camp and the people talking to each other in the local language Chichewa about the question stated, the word *"ma-burundi"* was used almost all the time. When directly asked about the word and the usage of it, some people said they would not call the people living in the camp like that as it is a *"bad word"*.

More problems arise when people from the camp visit the nearest town, which in the case of Dzaleka is the capital city, Lilongwe. Most commonly there is negative labelling and sometimes they face abuse within the town or on the way there. Participants have mentioned how labels and insults restricts people from Dzaleka conducting their legally and permitted procedures outside the camp. A shop owner from Rwanda said

> *"with the Malawian people it is a challenge. When I am going to town to buy things to put in my shop, they call us "maburundi" in the bus. When they recognise you are a refugee, they increase the price of the transport. From Lilongwe they say it's 1500 and when we reach the camp and they see I use the things in bought in town in my shop they will say no, we talked about the transport and you should now pay 2000. It happens*

mostly when I go to town. They call all the people from the camp "maburundi", and they just name all of us like that. It means refugee, doesn't matter where you are from. It is an insult, it is a big insult." (37, female, Rwanda).

The fear of such discrimination keeps some people in the camp. They don't leave the camp because they don't want to be "beaten", "shouted at" or "insulted", as participants have experienced that. If problems occur in town with refugees living there illegally, a bad reputation of all people in the camp becomes common sense in Malawi, instead of individuals, who are involved in these activities. One participant of several has said that

"the area they [refugees] were given in the first place was just a small area and now it has been found that they [camp management] are trying to expand, and our fear is that they are trying maybe take a place which is too close to the camp. At the end of the year it will be found that we are being chased further. Moved away [from our land] because of the camp." (27, male, Malawian).

Notably, the data points out that most Malawian participants living surrounding the camp think the people living inside the camp are dangerous because they have *"mental traumas"* and are *"used to fighting"* because they have *"experienced war"*. Participants have said that there was a time in the past, before set rules were agreed on, between people living in the camp and the local community, where several incidents of spreading violence by the people in the camp have affected the local community. One village leader recaptured that

"in the past when the refugees had arrived in the 90s before there were solid rules concerning the refugees and the life together, when they had conflicts in the camp and they would fight, and violence came to the camp people, some refugees would flee to the surrounding communities to hide out. So, when the people in the camp followed up they would take machetes and search for them and the violence would spread to the local communities and we feel that our lives are at risk and we could become casualties of something we know nothing about and a conflict we don't know." (58, female, Malawian).

Moreover, even though the camp has mostly positive influence on the people's lives, 4 out of 5 participants disagree with refugees integrating into the Malawian society. Mentioned reasons for that is that Malawi itself is a poor country and the intake of more people restrains Malawians from opportunities. A younger farmer and student explained that

"Malawi is a country which has its own problems, poverty and unemployment and maybe land issues, jobs, there is a lot of unemployment you know so us bringing in other people into our country or rather a community or a district such as Dowa which is

mostly people who are unemployed or suffering in one way or another you actually think of the refugees as people who come and maybe they become more like a hindrance" (24, male, Malawian)

Nevertheless, this suggests that, **despite labelling**, there are different interactions taking place between the labelled people; in this case the people living in the camp and the local population.

6.4 Identification with the label

Every given label makes people feel something. One way or another the label has an influence on the life and livelihoods of the labelled person. This section will explain the adaptation strategies mentioned by the participants. When speaking to Chatha he explained

"the problems I am facing are more clothes, and food. My wife says that we are receiving food, but there is no firewood or charcoal to make food. When we go out of the camp, to search for it, the Malawians can beat us, and take away our things. We get food, but food is not the only need. We need charcoal to make food" (64, male DRC).

Due to the limited funding the camp receives, food rations are becoming scarcer. People must find ways to make a living to support themselves and their families. One strategy is to wander around the local villages and collect firewood or cut down trees to make charcoal. This is obviously problematic for the local community as they rely on the same resources and technically these actions are illegal. Sadly, as an older woman explains,

"*the name refugee, everyone who is called this is in trouble. A refugee is someone who don't have rights in this camp. We don't have anywhere to farm, we can't get a job, we cannot find legumes, if it's not UNHCR to give us food, we would die. And if we go to the surrounding villages to find firewood to make food. If a Malawian saw you, they could even beat you and steal all the branches you have collected. We are thankful to UNHCR to place us near a borehole. One of my kids is very traumatised and there are others that are injured. So, the water is near to us, it is good"* (72, female, Burundi).

The adaptation strategy evolves in resulting conflicts with the local community as they compete for the resource firewood. Another adaptation strategy to avoid the labelling mentioned by several participants is to wake up in the middle of the night to fetch water at the borehole. This is because there are less people there thus there is less exposure to conflicts and labelling through avoiding public spaces. Moreover, due to the negative perception of refugees and the limited option provided by the Malawian government in terms of self-reliance and building a livelihood, numerous CBOs have been founded in the camp in the past years. They are formed for

several reasons like education, medical care, financial support or youth work. Most of them hoped to change Dzaleka and the overall perception and narrative of life in a refugee camp. Finally, people living in the camp were asked how they feel and how they themselves view the label *"refugee".* One young leader of a CBO in the camp answered

> *"Looking at myself as a refugee does it change my perception? Yes, to a certain extend it changes. When I find myself in a situation where I am not free to get myself out and do what I feel like I should do. It gives me a lot of pain knowing I have the potential but because of my status I can't do them. For example, I am very passionate to leadership and working with youth and making youth responsible, there are things I would love to tell refugee youth, not just in Dzaleka but around the word that they have potential and if they unlock this potential, they will be greater than anyone else. We are no different from the citizens of Malawi but because of our status we are prevented to make a step forward. As for me, that freedom is limiting our potential and blocking us."* (22, male, DRC).

Several CBOs try to work actively to change the narrative of Dzaleka and the negative perception. Especially young people who were interviewed said they want to actively break the vicious circle. This same young activist also said

> "*the reason why people are not united and why people are not succeeding is because of the massive discrimination all around the camp. Where people group themselves because they come from a certain country, because you are coming from Burundi, you are coming from Somalia, we are a minority, we shouldn't mingle with others. And the lack of collaboration is causing a lot. Lots of people in the camp have a single story. Imagine people growing up in a country where they hear Rwanda is the most severe and bad country and they are killers. Then, they arrive in Malawi and think those are very bad people but it's not the fact. It's something that happened 1990 something, it is not the same generation. I don't see the reason why people should be carried out by a single story. They heard people from Somalia are this and this but it's not true."* (22, male, DRC).

Working actively, in their free time, creating youth groups, giving speeches, connecting different nationalities to each other to create a space for exchange, is one of the extensive adaptation strategies encountered in the field.

6.5 Summary

The data has demonstrated how the combination of different legal, institutional and social labels affect people's lives and perceptions of themselves. The people are exposed to different labels and the findings have highlighted the need to differentiate between the different levels and categories of labels, especially on the legal and institutional level of labelling. For instance, people are caught between the top-down legal label and the institutional labels, as people depend on both to build and benefit their lives just as they are exposed to the every-day social labels. Yet, certain labels have more influence on one's life than others. This must be kept in mind when thinking about the categorisation of people living at Dzaleka. Here, the presented legal labels depend on the different outcomes of the refugee status determination. Legal labels include refugee, asylum-seeker, rejected and final rejected. Those labels are imposed by the government and people receiving the label they rely on it and people have no say or opinion to offer of any of the decisions. The only influence people can have, is through their own personal stories. This could lead to people lying about their stories because they think if the stories are made more horrible than they already are, the status is given more easily (male PLAN-Malawi representative). People are dependent on the label they will receive.

Yet, the findings have shown that all labels can have both, positive and negative effects. This also applies to the institutional labels. Here, the labels used are clearly negative, calling people vulnerable or very poor. Yet those labels can have a strong positive influence if the person that was receiving the label is chosen for an intervention - due to the label. In the third section, social labels have been identified. Here, the ethnic labels and the generalisation of people were the most concise and predominant labels based on the data collected. Those have a strong influence on people's adaptation and identification, because those labels are built on cultural practices and ethnic belonging, active discrimination and forming of groups.

In conclusion, the identified results revealed that the labelled persons identify themselves with certain labels more than others. To some extent, people are working against certain labels as they cannot identify with them. This will be discussed more in depth in the following Chapter.

7 Discussion

In this discussion, the implications of the findings will be related back to the underlying theoretical framework of Chapter 2 and the potential contribution of this research will be highlighted. As this research generally aimed at distinguishing the predominate labels, this chapter will also give comprehensive answers of the research question and its connected sub-questions. Those will also be connected to the findings presented in Chapter 6. Here, it became obvious that the people's reality in the light of labelling is very different than expected. This will further be explained as well. Additionally, the importance of social exclusion and the people's views on the category "refugee" in connection to the before displayed existing literature will be examined. Finally, a comment on the contextual relevance of this research will be undertaken to be able to give a look towards the future and a recommendation for further research.

7.1 Analysis

To summarise the findings and give a comprehensive overview of the results connected to the displayed literature, the following will answer the research question and the connected sub-questions asked in this thesis.

RQ*: How do people experience the legal and social category they find themselves in and in which way are they adapting to- and living by this label in the Dzaleka Refugee Camp?*

This thesis argues that people experience firstly, the legal and social categories they receive very different from one another and the categories itself. Contrary to the literature, the research has point out that the legal category is not the most relevant category in the life of people living at Dzaleka. It is correct that most people want the refugee status as a label in their lives, as it does imply several benefits people without status could not access. So, people aspire to belong to the category of being a refugee, or "having a status".
Especially in Malawi, due to the long waiting times for the status determination and the outcome, the legal category is relevant. However, the social categories play a more major role in people's everyday life. So, the emerging findings are that people rely on the legal category. They need the status for their lives and to be approved through the government system, to be able to attend higher education and apply for resettlement. Regardless, all those options are

limited and inaccessible. Additionally, the fear of not getting a status and belonging to the category "refugee" seems to have an influence on some people's mental health. This is due to jealousy and conflicts emerging if someone gets granted status before a person who has stayed in the camp longer. The legal category must be kept a secret by some who were seen and described as more vulnerable by the government of Malawi. Yet, on a day to day basis, other labels have a more substantial influence. Based on the interviews, another category has emerged; the institutional label. The existing literature seem to consolidate legal and institutional labels, whereas in the refugee context of Malawi, they must be separated as they have a different influence. Although institutions working in the camp apply labels, they are perceived differently by the interviewed population of people living in the camp. Whilst people seem to feel powerless and exposed when it comes to legal labels, the institutional labels are wanted and sometimes needed because they hold benefits people without the label cannot access.

Another key point is that the social labels, specifically ethnic labels and cultural practices have a dominant influence on people's behaviour inside the Dzaleka Camp. It is questionable whether the participants know the labels and evolving problems they are facing are based on labels as active agents of discrimination. Moreover, in several cases those labels, and the growing hatred and misunderstandings, leads to the political problems and the cause of flight for people to the camp. The experience of the category and the creating of social othering are not only problems people in the camp are facing, but they are also active agents, sometimes involved in socially excluded minorities.

Likewise, this section has provided an insight into how labels mentioned by people living in the camp differ. Not only this, the meaning and understanding of the label seem to differ as well. The label "maburundi", as an example, is a label with different interpretations. While people living in the camp, the labelled person, perceives the label as extremely negative, there are some people using the label that do not understand the negative connection to it. But the experiencing of the label differs. While the camp is perceived positive, bringing economic activity and uplifting the area through development and market options, the people are still labelled negatively. It becomes apparent that labels do influence people's lives massively and the restrictions some people are feeling and facing restrict them from certain opportunities.

Finally, people are adapting differently to the imposed labels. While there is little people can do about their legal and institutional label, there are different youth organisations, CBOs and NGOs working hard to advocate for the understanding of refugees and their rights. In fact, people living in the camp have different adaptation strategies and react differently to the labels given and imposed. Young people particularly try to work against the "othering" and group

creation through discrimination. Still, numerous people adapt by avoiding public spaces or change their daily routine to avoid those. This shows that people living in the camp are aware of the labels and work actively to change them; through accepting the powerlessness of education and active agency.

SQ 1: *What are the prevalent labels applied for people living in Dzaleka Refugee Camp by different groups/organisations?*

Different labels have completely different influences on people's lives. Labels distinguished in the refugee context of Malawi are different legal labels like refugee, asylum-seeker, rejected and final-rejected, as well as labels on an institutional level; like the most vulnerable people and "ultra-poor". Moreover, social labels were identified like the generalisation "maburundi" and the different ethnic labels like the Hutu-Tutsi and politically motivated labels based on labelling in the origin country. It became clear that organisations working in the camp use very different labels from the people living inside the camp or the governmental institutions. Here, the vulnerability of people is highlighted to form more in-groups inside the camp. This is to define and mark the people receiving more benefits than other due to the classified category. This is the case in numerous different refugee camps, as funding and the willingness to donate has decreased, while the number of people being forced to flee has increased.

SQ 2: *How restrictive or beneficial are the labels to people's lives?*

The labels imposed onto people in general are rather restrictive, keeping people in the camp on the edge of society. A reason for that is also due to Malawi's general refugee policy and the lack of education regarding the reasons why people flee and what they are seeking in Malawi; shelter and peace. Consequently, on the one hand, being a refugee and falling under this certain label enhances their access certain opportunities they could otherwise not access. On the other hand falling under the category "refugee" brings numerous problems, some of them also based on Malawi's refugee policy. Therefore, the legal label seems to be both a curse and blessing, depending on the perspective. The labels used by organisations in the camp seem to be mostly beneficial. As they try to address the needs of the least advantaged of the society, the most negative sounding labels often hold the most benefits. An example for this is the livelihood interventions undertaken by the NGO CARD in cooperation with and through funding of UNHCR. The social labels seem to be both, beneficial and restrictive at the same time. While they

can create challenges, lead to group forming and generalisation, the origin and ethnic or political affiliation might be helpful in the beginning after arriving in the camp. This sense of belonging helps people to orientate and get used to the structures and the camp itself.

SQ 3: *How does labelling influence conflicts in the Dzaleka Refugee Camp?*

Labels and conflict seem to mutually cause themselves and be directly interlinked. On the one hand, due to the different labels practiced in certain countries of origin, conflicts evolve out of those. An example for this is the ethnic labels described earlier. On the other hand, conflicts arise due to the missing infrastructure and services in the camp and labelling happens in public spaces. As suggested by participants, those problems could maybe be solved by better education about one's origin and awareness training. More cultural responses, respect and education to make people aware of the problems connected to this may decline the level of conflict and labelling. Furthermore, although sadly unrealistic, if more funding for services and infrastructure would be available, the dependency on this would decline. Maybe this could have an influence on the conflicts arising due to the limited availability of, for example, the bore holes.

Generally, the perception of "refugees" overall seems to be very negative in Malawi. Experts have said this is due to the lack of education and knowledge about the reasons leading to fleeing (male There is Hope representative/ male PLAN-Malawi representative). This pattern of thought can be witnessed through the right-wing rising in other countries in the Global South and in the Global North alike. Yet, the people being directly affected by the camp, the local population living around the camp, have seen a positive influence of the camp in general due to the increase in services and possibilities offered. When discussing labelling in the Malawian context, the local population generally uses very negatively connotated labels to describe and talk about the people living in the camp. This could be due to the scarce resources both groups, people living in the camp and around, compete for. Nevertheless, despite labels, there are continuous transactions taking place between both groups. The local people rely on the camp for small jobs and still use the camp and the facilities on a weekly basis. Therefore, the labels do not seem to intervene or restrain the exchange between the local community and the people living in the camp. This explains how labelling does have an influence on people's lives, people label and are used to label, but the ones implementing the label are not restricted due to those. The labels do not seem to prevent the connection. Yet, the people being labelled have a more

intense restriction due to the label. This leads to discrimination, which prevents the people living in the camp from living a peaceful life.

7.2 Connecting the literature

The final chapter will connect the literature presented in Chapter 2, the research framework. Here, the appropriate and relevant research will be used and directly linked to the presented findings of chapter 6. The research in Malawi and the displayed findings have noted, that labelling, very correctly, *is* a process, that occurs "at different levels and within different arenas of interaction" (Wood 2007: 20). The refugee context of Malawi is a good example where labelling does not only exist between the state and the people in the society, but also between people and through the "construction of othering and the creation of a certain identity creation" (ibid.). The research clearly reveals, that labelling happens at completely different stages of society. People fleeing and arriving at Malawi's borders first face the legal labels imposed by the state, but their daily life is more shaped by the labels created and used within the society. Here, it is important to note that there are different societies existing at Dzaleka. First, the direct society *inside* the camp and second, the fragile and unwanted society of the community that develops because of the constant exchange between the people living in Dzaleka and the local community living around it.

Labels unarguably "infuse the world of refugees" (Zetter 1991: 44). This research highlights that this happens on the one hand, with restrictions and negative labelling and on the other, with benefits and through giving and receiving. It can also be confirmed, that "for the purpose of asylum, the legal differentiation between refugees and non-refugees is crucial" (Warner 1992: 366). The legal category holds benefits that nobody else can access. In this case study these are opportunities like resettlement and the chance to take part in a diploma program or higher education. Furthermore, as there are only very limited financial means and the omnipresent donor fatigue calls for a distinction between people in on one way or another – in Dzaleka this happens through the state or organisations working in the camp.

Nevertheless, the legal category is not the only important category as often false assumed. Other labels seem to have more influence and call for an adequate adaptation strategy. Through "othering", different groups will be constructed by people living inside the camp as well as the local community as fundamentally different, which leads to evolving conflicts.

8 Conclusion

Throughout this thesis, the implementation of the conceptual approach of labelling has been explored. It is aimed at answering the question how refugees and asylum-seekers live by and adapt to labelling. The research was conducted through a thirteen weeks fieldwork study at Dzaleka Refugee Camp in Malawi. This camp is a typical example of a protracted refugee camp as it exists since the late 1990s. Through in-depth interviews the research questions and connected sub-questions could be answered extensively.

First, this thesis focused on broadly elaborating on the existing literature and building the underlying and conceptual framework. Background information on the framework and emerging research gap was additionally given. The gap exists around the coping mechanism and adapting strategies, as well as the influence labelling has on refugees, asylum seekers, people finding themselves forced to flee and people living in refugee like situations. Primary assumptions before going into the field revolved around the legal conception and categorisation on an international and governmental level. After beginning the study, it became clear that other labels have a more important influence on the lives of people living at Dzaleka Refugee Camp. In this sense it became apparent that social labels were the main driver for changing habits and adaption to a label. Therefore, the research questions were extended to include the social categories as well as the legal labels people face.

Following this, in chapter 3, the methods used in this study were explained. Moreover, a statement to the changes made was given. In chapter 4, the fieldwork was reflected upon and the positionality as well as the limitations and challenges gave an overview of the time in the field. Thereafter, the regional setting was described to enrich knowledge about Malawi and the research site – here Dzaleka Refugee Camp in Dowa, the central region. The findings have presented how the legal label is not the most dominant label in people's lives. Due to the sensitive nature of the label and the importance to get acknowledged and registered as a refugee is does hold importance. Nevertheless, there are other labels having a dominant influence in the refugee context of Malawi. Along with the legal label, social labels and categories have been described as very drastic and far-reaching constraints, which people must get used to and face. Several coping mechanisms like changing daily habits to avoid the labelling and evolving conflicts or working actively against the injustice coming with the labels are just two to mention. Apart from the labelling happening on different levels of interaction, the state and the people and the communities themselves, there are exchanges and labelling happening between the host population and the communities at Dzaleka. Here it can be seen that despite labelling, there is active

trading and market challenges happening between the local population and the people living at Dzaleka. The broad implication of the presented discussion in Chapter 7 is that the literature often false assumes and attribute too much importance to the legal label. This case study has highlighted how different social and institutional labels have, at least in short term, a very influential effect. Overall, several adaptation strategies were found and dealing with the labels was pictured through different interviews on different levels, in the camp, local community and organisations working in the camp.

In conclusion, people in the camp are exposed to different institutions, caught between the very top-down legal label, the institutional labels and everyday social labels people are facing.

8.1 Limitations and implications for further research

This research has been focused around individual experiences and perceptions. Those are in general hard to measure and the number of people who were being interviewed was relatively small. This means the findings cannot be generalised or exerted to a different setting than the Malawian refugee context.

There has not been enough research focusing on the experiencing of labelling and the use of labels in refugee context, specifically in a protracted refugee situation where findings might change over time and labels and importance of those might shift throughout the years. Moreover, each camp, refugee situation and individual person is different. Yet, this thesis provides an important insight into the understanding of labelling and the change of importance and influence of labels.

Specifically, in Malawi, it could enhance and enrich knowledge about labelling to focus on how labels compare and contrast according to Malawians living in different parts of the country; how they perceive refugees at Dzaleka and how these contrasts to those in the host community. More generally this could also be done with conducting research in a different camp or country setting.

8.2 Recommendations

First and furthermost, more advocacy for protracted refugee camps is needed on an international level to work against the negative perception and the rising donor fatigue, which has a direct

influence on people on the local level, like at Dzaleka. To change the situation for these people, there could be more international pressure on the Malawian government to accept the refugee framework to the fullest. But, due to the changes in Malawi's refugee framework the people seeking asylum and protection in Malawi are restricted in several different ways. Firstly, they are not allowed to work, integrate and do not have freedom of movement. Moreover, due to the harsh living conditions and the limited job opportunities in Malawi in general hinder a proper, adequate treatment of refugees. Yet, there needs to be a way to find more appropriate treatment and handling of people living at Dzaleka, which holds unbelievable talent. So, apart from the fact that there needs to be a change in the narrative and use of language when talking about the people living in the camp, Malawi needs to change its policies towards refugees and focus on educating about refugees, asylum-seekers, and other people in similar situations to explain the reasons and conflicts leading to the flight. Whilst there are limited options due to Malawi's lacking economy, self-reliance and the chance to integrate and prove their skills and talents could be at least one option Malawi would be able to provide to offer the people who are **forced** to flee their origin countries.

Beyond the case study it becomes apparent that a change in the narrative and making the individual visual again in a huge, falsely assumed homogenous group, which "refugees" are most certainly not. Additionally, countries in the Global North should meet their responsibilities and accept more refugees via resettlement and legal migration routes, working against the rising numbers of asylum-seekers, which are still mostly hosted by countries in the Global South. Hopefully, more people in Malawi and elsewhere in the world start change their labelling and narrative to include refugees and people in refugee like situations more. As this case study has presented, at least in the Malawian context, it has a huge influence on people's lives. Through the use and implementation of labels, refugees and people in refugee like situations must overcome more obstacles than necessary.

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11 Appendix

In-depth Interview Guide – Camp Residents

1) General Information:

- Origin, Age, Languages, Family, Time in Malawi, Living situation, Status

2) Specific Questions:

- Can you tell me about the registration process?
- Which organisations in the camp do you know?

→ Do you work with any of those?

- Do you take part in any other activities in the camp?

→ What other people are there with you?

- Who do you live with?
- Where are your neighbours from?

→ Do you get along with them?

- Who did you get along with when being a new-arrival?
- What are your main positive and negative characteristics?
- When you hear the word refugee, what comes to your mind?

3) Labelling topic:

- Have you ever been differentiated inside the camp?

→ Why? By whom?

- Do you have knowledge about other people being differentiated?

→ Why? By whom?

- Is there a group of people you would like to belong to in the camp?
- Is there a group of people you do not want to belong to in the camp?
- Have you received any other names apart from your own in the camp?

→ What name? By whom? Why?

- Do you feel a difference between someone with status and someone without?

→ Is the status topic in your life?

- What are the main problems you are facing in the camp?
- Have you learned anything new since being here?
- What are the main challenges people are facing in the camp?
- What are the main reasons for conflicts here in the camp?

4) Fading out:

- In the future, would you like to stay in Malawi, resettle or return home?

→ If not Malawi: What would need to change?

- What should change for you in the camp?
- What do you do for your personal development?
- Do you have anything to add?

Interview Guide – local community

1) General Information:

- Origin, Age, Languages, Family, Time living in the village, Living situation, Occupation

2) Specific Questions:

- How often to you go to the camp?

→ What for?

- How do interact with the people in the camp?
- When you think about the people in the camp, what comes to your mind?
- How do you call the people living in the camp?
- What impact did the camp have on your life?
- What impact did the camp have on your area?
- Have you heard positive stories about people in the camp?
- Have you heard negative stories about people in the camp?
- What are the positive aspects of the people being in your region?
- What are the negative aspects of the people being in your region?

3) Fading out:

- Would you agree with refugees integrating?
- Are you happy you live close to the camp?
- Are you planning on staying in this area in the future?
- Anything to add?

Interview Guide – Organisations working in the camp

1) General information:

- What is your role here in the camp?
- What services does this organisation provide in the camp?

→ Accessible to who?

2) Specific Questions:

- How do you choose the people you work with?
- Do you notice differences between the people in the camp?
- Is there a noticeable difference between people with and without status?
- Do you distinguish in your work between these?
- How do you refer to the people you are working with?
- What are the main limitations of the camp for the people?
- How do people make a living in the camp?
- What are the reasons for people to get their status denied/ that you don't work with them?
- Are certain people less viable than others?
- What are people classified at by your organisation?