INFORMAL RECYCLING OF CONGOLESE REFUGEE YOUTH IN KAMPALA

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Abstract

This article explores the informal recycling of young Congolese refugees based in three neighborhoods of Kampala: Kamwokya, Nakulabye, and Lungujja. Livelihood experiences of Congolese youth related to the waste picking is identified as an important asset to navigate the everyday exclusion of the city. If the right-allocating mechanism positions refugees in stratified membership around certain rights, in Uganda those who chose to settle in cities independently are not eligible of humanitarian aid and, therefore, most of them remain in precarious conditions. Congolese youth' urban hustle highlights the importance of strengthening local and national knowledge about forced migration in urban settings.

Questo articolo esplora il riciclo informale dei giovani rifugiati congolesi che vivono in tre quartieri di Kampala: Kamwokya, Nakulabye e Lungujja. Le esperienze dei giovani congolesi legate alla raccolta dei rifiuti sono identificate come una risorsa importante per navigare l'esclusione quotidiana della città. Se il meccanismo di assegnazione dei diritti posiziona i rifugiati in un'appartenenza stratificata intorno a certi diritti, in Uganda coloro che hanno scelto di stabilirsi in città in modo indipendente non hanno diritto agli aiuti umanitari e, quindi, la maggior parte di loro rimane in condizioni precarie. L'economia informale dei giovani congolesi evidenzia l'importanza di rafforzare le conoscenze locali e nazionali sulla migrazione forzata in ambiente urbano.

Keywords: Uganda, Congolese, refugees, recycling

Introduction

This article is based on data collected during ethnographic research conducted between March and August 2021 in Uganda and designed to explore and compare the informal recycling practices of internally displaced persons in Gulu and urban Congolese refugees in Kampala. In this case, I focus on the conditions of Congolese refugees in Kampala and the survival strategies, such as informal waste recycling, of youth, in an attempt to highlight how experiences of displacement and extreme marginalization in urban space influence the production of recycling-related livelihoods.

The article is structured as follows: an initial section which compares classical refugee management to the self-relience strategy implemented in Uganda. Secondly, urban refugees' opportunities and challenges in Kampala are discussed. Finally, the agency of young Congolese refugees and their participation in the informal economy related to waste recycling is explored.

International and Ugandan approach to refugees

The images of desperate migrants sailing in deflated dinghies has become the symbol of African migration and reinforced the idea that this South-to-North movement is what all African migrants want to achieve. Dismantling the media's sensational narrative and conventional belief, new evidence reveals instead that not only is migration conflict-induced, but it mostly occurs crossing land borders, not seas. According to UNHCR (2020), Africa hosts more than one third of the world's refugees[1], about 7 million, plus 12.5 million internally displaced persons living in their own country of origin[2]. Roughly 80% of African refugees remain within the continent[3], moving primarily within their own country or neighboring countries. The states that host the largest number of refugees and asylum seekers are Uganda (1.4 million people, mostly from South Sudan) and Sudan (1.1 million), followed by DRC, Ethiopia, Kenya, Chad, and Cameroon[4].

The international management of refugees and the design of interventions dedicated to them often take the form of huge settlements directed by international humanitarian agencies. This mode of refugee management is usually linked to a prolongation of the emergency phase in the absence of long-term solutions. But the structural restrictions of settlement life for those without income or trade make this type of solution unsustainable to them in the long run. In addition, the financial, physical, and psychological consequences for refugees are exacerbated by the departure of international organizations once attention wanders to the next "crisis" after a few years. Hence, the alternative proposed by scholars has been to change the approach to the problem of refugees by extending the area of competence to development policy and not only to the humanitarian sector (Betts et al., 2012). In addition, to overcome the refugee camp model, some states started implementing autonomy-oriented policies through the self-reliance model. One of the African countries in which the self-reliance system has become more widespread is Uganda. Self-reliance was introduced by the government in 1998. There are no refugee camps organized according to the classical humanitarian model of aid distribution. Instead, there are settlements based on self-reliance strategies. Refugees have access to a plot of land, of a size proportionate to the size of the family unit and are supplied with the necessary materials to cultivate it. The food aid plan foresees a progressive reduction of rations over the years, ideally replaced by the agricultural production of the refugees themselves, in theory until complete self-sufficiency. They should also be guaranteed the possibility of starting a

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[1] unhcr.org/5f85726a4.pdf (accessed on the 8th January 2022).
[2] https://www.un.org/africarenewal/news/forced-displacement-we-can-learn-africa. Accessed on the 8th of January 2022.
[3] https://reliefweb.int/report/world/african-migration-trends-watch-202. Accessed on the 8th of January 2022.
[4] https://www.unhcr.org/5f85726a4.pdf. Accessed on the 8th January 2022.

commercial activity, sometimes supported with professional courses and small financing, and of working both inside and outside the settlement. Nevertheless, Ugandan laws relating to the right to work are unclear, as stated by Zetter & Ruaudel (2016). If the necessary permits are obtained, refugees are free to move around the country. The Ugandan's Refugee Act 2006 establishes refugees' rights to live, work, move freely and own land in Uganda, but these rights are often not available in the urban setting. Limits of the Refugee Act 2006 have been deeply explored by the Refugee Law Project (2006). In fact, the right of free movement, established in Article 30, "is subject to reasonable restrictions", meaning that refugees need special permission to go a significant distance from the settlement, e.g., to the next town. If a refugee wishes to live outside the settlement, he must apply for permission. Those who decide to leave the settlement are not in a position of illegality but have no more access to food and assistance.

Thus the self-reliance approach introduces substantial new features, but it does not automatically translate into equally different results in the lives of refugees, as pointed by Hovil (2007). The author claims that the concept of settlements or camps are interchangeable, as the logic remains the same: to separate refugees from the rest of the population by making the possibility of receiving assistance contingent upon remaining in limited areas. By presenting the findings on self-settled refugees, the author challenges the settlement structure, arguing that local integration in the host community is a better alternative. The problems associated with settlements, such as the absence of security, economic integration (due to isolation), self-sufficiency, and freedom of movement, are confirmed by the increasing number of refugees who try to find independent accommodation in the urban centers of the host country, sometimes avoiding registering as asylum seekers.

Self-settled urban refugees: from settlements to cities

As indicated by Madhavan & Landau (2011) flows of refugees and rural migrants contribute to the rate of urbanization and expansion of African cities. The newcomers are distributed differently in the city depending on family ties, social networks already present, nationality, period of arrival, and level of economic and social success achieved. The presence of thousands of refugees in the suburbs of the capital city of Uganda was formally recognized by UNHCR only in 2009[5]. Prior to that time, reports from 2005 indicated the small number of 210 refugees residing in the capital city due to relocations, medical problems, or personal security concerns (Sandvik, 2011). A decade later, in 2017, Kampala was hosting 94,958 refugees and asylum seekers (Monteith et al., 2017). In 2020, around 40.000 were

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[5] https://www.unhcr.org/protection/hcdialogue%20/4ab356ab6/unhcr-policy-refugee-protection-solutions-urban-areas.html. Accessed on the 16th of January 2022.

Congolese refugees (Gusman, 2020). Since the early 1990s, the ongoing violence in the Democratic Republic of Congo (DCR) caused the death of about four million people and another four million displaced (Lyytinen, 2015). Many Congolese fled during the First Congo War (1996-1997), the Second War (1998-2003), the military violence of 2008, post-election conflicts in 2011, and 2014 fighting between the government army and the M23 rebels. But an ongoing eruption of deadly clashes between armed militia groups is at the root of a constant back and forth movement that takes people from one side of the border to the other. In June 2020, within two days, about 3000 Congolese reached Uganda in order to escape a militia attack in Ituri province, after being stuck at the Ugandan border, closed to contain the spread of the pandemic.

For some refugees, the city is not the end of the road, but just another stage on the way to another destination. For the Congolese refugees in Kampala, the hope to emigrate to North America or to another European country collides with the complexity and uncertainty of a process which may never come true, and plunges refugees into the "present of waiting" (Gusman, 2018). This is the great suffering in which refugees cannot find a sense of belonging and adopt a religious experience which gives meaning to their being "stuck" in the city. This condition is believed to be caused by the evil mechanism of the "blocage" which doesn't allow refugees to obtain resettlement (*ibid*.).

New evidence from Kampala shows that urban refugees, such as the Congolese, are the ones most in need of protection (Silberman, 2020). Many of these refugees live in dire conditions, without access to basic needs. They often settle on the margins of the city or in the most marginalized areas, such as slums, characterized by poor sanitation and high levels of poverty. These groups of urban refugees contribute to expanding informal or semi-informal settlements and compete for the scarce resources available with the host community. They often face xenophobic attitudes and spark intercommunal violence. They have no access to assistance from international agencies and, because of their lack of documentation or their foreign status, they face discrimination in access to housing, employment, education, and health care.

Congolese refugees in Kampala

Opportunities

The following section is based on qualitative data collected among individuals and families of Congolese refugees in June 2021. Manu, a 23-year-old Congolese refugee, provided great assistance in the process of understanding how life trajectories for refugees are characterized by a high level of internal variability, as they take complex decisions dictated by the circumstances in which they live and the more or less wide margin of choice available.

I met Manu at the Ghetto Research Lab (GRL), a CBO that develops innovative projects to deal with environmental concerns in the impoverished neighborhood of Kwamokya. Manu often visited GRL to exchange ideas and collaborate on different projects. He also used his sewing machines to sew pieces of fabric that he interwove with his hand-made paper beads, creating necklaces that he could sell. He arrived in Kampala in 2013 with his mother and sisters, after the first had been injured by the M23. As a young boy in the city, he lived in the streets because there was too little space in the house. During the day, he used to collect plastic bottles and metal to get some small income. His sisters turned to prostitution as the ultimate survival option. After 5 years of the hardship in the city, Manu's family moved to Nakivale[6] settlement where at least some food, water and shelter were provided by international agencies. There, through different types of youth training with "Opportunigee", a non-profit organization, Manu's life changed.

> I discovered myself. I did mentoring, nonviolent conflict resolution courses, and more. I was curious and wanted to learn, so people liked me. I got many foreign friends (29/06/2021).

His proactive attitude and acquaintance with some Americans gave Manu some informal work opportunities for a few years, but when the Americans left, he was forced to look for opportunities in Kampala. Manu didn't lose hope of finding work and "rendered entrepreneurship a survival mechanism" (Thieme, 2010), very useful to low-income communities in urban contexts. He can sew, make crafts by collecting used paper and pieces of kitenge fabric to make necklaces, and often offers dance and theater workshops to local NGOs. Currently, his main project is the creation of water purifiers made of recycled plastic for use in refugee camps.

> Mostly I am an ecologist now, I do upcycle activities. My vision is to see people getting old and being free. Science and technology can help (29/06/2021).

Manu's adoption of humanitarian and global environmental goals is a powerful tool in context of displacement as "a chance of transferal of symbolic capital over borders" (Manuylov, 2017). In fact, the power of framing practices in the direction of donors can help urban refugees to survive and have a chance to get financial assistance as their main difficulty stems from the economic deprivation suffered from lack of formal assistance.

Manu's friend is called Peace, he is 23 years old. For him, the most obvious reason for moving to the city was the concentration of formal and informal economic opportunities. The urban context, in fact,

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[6] Based in the South-West part of Uganda. It was established in 1958 and it is one of the oldest refugee settlements in Africa.

offers more chances to find employment compared to the rural environment of the refugee settlements (Jacobsen, 2004).

> I was able to get a driving license here in Kampala and work as a chauffeur, but with the lockdown, I lost money and nowadays am unable to rent the car, so I am jobless now (29/06/2021).

Peace stays in the neighborhood of Nakulabye and lives in a room with his father, mother, and 5 brothers and sisters. In 2014, Peace's family came straight to Kampala, declining refugee in the settlement. They passed by the Nakivale Settlement but did not stop. Some of their family members reside there and had told them about some unpleasant aspects of life there:

> People look unkempt: many smoke cigarettes, take marijuana, drink. Also, for young people it is difficult, there is no work in the settlement (29/06/2021).

The fear of being the subject of a witchcraft attack was another reason why the family did not move into the settlement. Living very close and in small spaces, in an environment with few opportunities, according to Peace is what leads people to be jealous and change mindset and hurt their loved ones.

> If you are rich or intelligent, they have to bewitch you. Witchcraft is the biggest problem there, but the government says it doesn't believe in it. If you don't have a proof, it's not there. The police are not going to arrest who does witchcraft. The people in settlement want everybody to be at the same level. If they see you want to step forward, they can kill you. In camp, you know each other. Witchcraft is family thing (Peace, 01/06/2021).

Peace's statement on witchcraft recalls how intimacy is threatening because the most dangerous aggression comes from the closest people, from family members and neighbors (Geschiere, 2013). Therefore, the most intimate areas of sociality are not structured by generalized reciprocity, a common assumption of classic anthropology, but by violence, jealousy, and exploitation. In light of these considerations, Peace's family decided to try to live in the city, with all the "struggle" that come with it, as "Ugandans don't even want to know about you even if you are in the same compound" (Peace, 01/06/2021). Sometimes, the anonymity of the city may allow the urban refugees to assume new identities which can provide physical security. Even more in this case, the urban anonymity has the benefit of protecting them from the dangerous world of witchcraft and providing hope to survive in a difficult present.

Hardship

Despite the increasing displacement of refugees from camps to cities, refugee conditions in urban settings defy the widespread belief, typical of humanitarian agencies, that urban refugees represent the most "resilient" individuals, while the weakest and most vulnerable remain in camps, where they can more easily receive assistance (Landau, 2004).

> Since we reached Kampala in 2014, they never gave us a hand for anything, not even food or rent. You have to fight, even though you cannot breathe, you can't give up (Peace, 01/06/2021).

The Congolese Pentecostal church was the only institution that helped Peace's family, giving them a place to sleep for a month once they reached Kampala. In the urban context, despite considerable needs, newcomers receive almost no help from international agencies, whether those registered as refugees or asylum seekers or undocumented. Often, as suggested by Bernstein and Okello (2007), the difficulties faced by self-settled refugees in Kampala stem from the widespread ignorance of city authorities about the presence of refugees and their belief that settlements are the only place where they can be found. In addition, acquiring official documents to gain refugee status is one of refugees' biggest challenges. The opaque bureaucratic process to obtain documents, and the consequent difficulty in finding a livelihood, exacerbate their vulnerability. The procedures to access legal entitlement are considered lengthy, costly, and confusing, as reported by Agora in 2018[7] from interviews with refugees in nine vulnerable urban neighborhoods. The study highlights how 20% of refugee respondents reported lacking the identification card.

Mary[8], Peace's friend, arrived in Kampala in 2020, during the first Covid lockdown. At that time, the Office of the Prime Minister[9] offices were closed. They told her to go to a settlement for the documents, but she had no money to travel. In such situation, Mary is not able to work.

> Also, for washing clothes they don't trust you if you don't have your ID. So, you are literally no one. Police can arrest you, I am afraid to go out of my house. And if someone want to send you money, you cannot get it, because you cannot even get a sim card (02/06/2021).

The process to get the documents is long: first, the statement to the police. Secondly, registration at the OPM office. Afterwards, the interview, and if they believe the story, an ID card and family certificate is issued, and eventually a refugee should have the same rights as a Ugandan citizen. When Mary arrived in Kampala, she believed that registration for refugee status was free. But after a year of waiting while living like a "ninja", the woman has decided to bribe the officials. Now, Mary is trying to put money aside to pay a Congolese middleman to take her to the right office and get her ID card. In addition, the path to acquire official documents passes through a long bureaucracy and the evaluation of the narrative of the refugee's memories by the bodies established for granting international protection. The narrative judgment puts additional pressure on refugees who are required to recount a particular story (Monteith & Mirembe, 2021), a story that should be plausible in the eyes

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[7]https://www.kcca.go.ug/media/docs/Kampala%20Urban%20Refugees%20And%20Host%20Community%20Needs%20Report.pdf. Accessed on the 14th of October 2021.
[8] This is a pseudonym.
[9] The office is responsible for all the refugees matters in Uganda.

of the committee, with no interruptions, no time gaps. Personal history often becomes the basis for the decision whether or not to grant refugee status. The lack of tangible evidence attesting to the truthfulness of the applicant's statements has led to the "credibility assessment" of the story as an alternative to the production of certifying documents (Sorgoni, 2019).

Mary decided to go to Kampala and settle in Nakulabye because of the high concentration of Congolese refugees. The neighborhood is characterized by poor access to water, poor sanitation, overcrowded housing, poor waste management. The poor quality of basic services is exacerbated by the challenge of physical insecurity and gender-based violence, as feared by Peace's mother, Aisha, and his sisters, Sadda and Alice. The girls were born in Congo and arrived in Kampala as 10- and 12-year-olds. They claim how their biggest fear is rape as, sometimes, they get back home very late after washing clothes. Schooling is too expensive, and the girls must work to help the family. So, Aisha states, often early marriage and pregnancy is seen as the only way to escape poverty.

In addition, the English language is a significant obstacle to Congolese refugees who are easily recognized as foreigners and thus exposed to episodes of discrimination and xenophobia. Ugandans often accuse Congolese refugees of stealing jobs from locals, of voting for the President and of being privileged compared to Ugandan citizens, given the measures taken to help them, such as the practice of resettlement in Europe or America.

> They say that when President Museveni will go away, Ugandans are going to kill all Congolese: they are keeping the pangas (machete) for us (Peace, 01/06/2021).

In conclusion, lack of access to financial and legal assistance, discrimination from both the State and the Ugandan population are some of the barriers which inhibit refugees' rights and make finding formal or gainful jobs difficult.

Recycling and Congolese urban refugee youth

"Getting by and getting organized"

The international agencies' official discourse depicts refugees and, above all, refugee youth, as helpless victims. This approach tends to simplify the complexity of daily and long-term survival strategies of refugee youth. Many organizations follow the definition of the Convention on the Rights of the Child, which considers every human being under the age of 18 to be a child, but there is no official chronological age defined for the category of "youth" (Clark-Kazak, 2009). Researchers have highlighted how classifications of childhood, youth and its meaning are highly variable in different social, geographical, and historical contexts (Burman, 1994). If chronological age in the definition of

youth is highly arbitrary, it is better to use the concept of social age to refer "to the socially constructed meanings and roles ascribed to different stages in the life course" (Clark-Kazak, 2014).

Informed by these analytical tools, young people's everyday strategies in the context of migration can be explored by employing Ruth Lister's conceptual approach to agency (ibid.). The "getting by" and "getting organized" forms of agency are employed by young Congolese refugees in Kampala in the process of decision-making regarding their material dimension of well-being. The first analytical frame of "getting by" refers to the daily material actions that make Congolese youth "reproductive actors" as they engage in the informal economy. In 2018, Peace's cousin, Akim (now an 18-year-old boy and the firstborn of his family) convinced his family to move to Kampala from Kyaka settlement[10].

> After 5 months, after getting the registration in the camp, we ran away because of hunger. In Kampala, getting money and paying rent is a big issue. But it is better in the city than in the camp, at least we can find small hustles here: we can collect plastic bottles. You can get 5000 UGX[11] every day. In camp, there is no way to collect bottles (Akim, 04/06/2021).

Akim's younger brothers and sisters are the family breadwinners. They show agency by contributing "to collective livelihood strategies in inter-generational families and household" (Clark-Kazak, 2014:5). The family is very big: there are 8 boys and 2 girls. The parents are both sick due to the violence experienced in Congo and the children are the ones that go to look for money. "We boys go out and look for collecting bottles, while girls go to wash clothes" (Akim, 04/06/2021).

In order to cope with material basic needs and structural challenges of living in urban setting, young Congolese refugees engage in everyday survival strategies by acting collectively and "getting organized" (ibid.:7). In 2021, wandering around the city looking for bargains, Akim had noticed people picking up bottles and speaking in Swahili. They were Congolese as well and had told him that this was a quick way to make money. So, soon after, Akim gathered his brothers and cousins to start collecting plastic bottles together. They usually start walking at 4 am, when it is still dark, and come back home at 10 pm, when the sun is already down. The average of the kilometers that they cover every day is approximately 25. After a few months, they discovered that changing neighborhoods in the city daily was a good strategy for not running out of plastic. Competition is very high, and you can't always find the bottles in the same places. By now, they know the whole capital, in which places to go and when. Bottles are found in stores, restaurants, bus parks, water drains. The spoiled ones are sold to scrap dealers who in turn resell them to local plastic recycling factories.

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[10] Refugee settlement established in 2005 in Kyegegwa District in South-West Uganda.
[11] 3945,22 UGX is equivalent to 1 euro.

Instead, the good bottles are traded with businesswomen who clean them at the roadside and resell them to people who fill them with juice or peanut butter.

> A kilo of plastic bottles is 200 UGX, while hard plastic like water bucket, is more expensive. With my brothers and cousin, we always move together (Akim, 04/06/2021).

The group uses a saving system. The people names are written on a list and every Sunday, someone receive some money from the whole group. The collective organization of ''economically active poor'' represents the will to be part of the city despite extremely difficult daily realities.

The hustle's coping strategies

When external factors threaten their enterprise, the group strategically adjusts. If recycling companies decrease the price of plastic, or stop buying bottles, as happened during the lockdown because some companies closed temporarily, the group changes hustle. They collect leftover cassava and bananas at markets, dry them and sell them. But when the price goes up, they go back to plastic. The informal workers' coping strategies also involve the organization of a strict daily schedule. Starting early in the morning allows Congolese youth to pick up bottles before the city cleaners and other people who manage to survive off of garbage. "Many other people do this plastic business, most of all Ugandan street kids. So, you must be sharp" (Akim, 04/06/2021). To avoid physical harassment in public by police and street kids, the group moves together. They separate sometimes in order not to fight for bottles, but always keep each other in sight. Waste work allows the refugees to avoid discrimination in the local marketplace and to get a daily income. In 2020, Akim tried to participate in a cooking course organized by a local NGO, but after a few months he stopped because the family needed the money: "When you go to school, you don't work, people at home are hungry" (Akim, 04/06/2021). Later, he tried to apply for catering, but many people told him they didn't want to work with Congolese refugees. Plastic is not the only business for the boys. Metal soda cups and metal sheets are sold for 1000 UGX per kilo. This is the only item collected as a group, the income from which is also divided equally among everyone, while the other recyclables are collected and sold individually. Roughly, each boy is able to earn between 10,000 and 20,000 UGX a day when they work. But during the rainy season, the work decreases, while during the dry season, it increases, since people use a lot more water bottles.

In contrast to the advantages of such work, there are many hardships to endure and threats to physical security. The group walks all day long, making the work very tiring. The risk of catching diseases is high, as the bottles are often collected in drainage ditches, where the water flowing is always polluted. Another source of danger comes from competition with street kids. Young Congolese have reported

that they are often attacked by gangs of street children who take them away the collected bottles. In addition, youth are often treated badly by residents who mistake them for thieves while they are looking for recyclable materials. In fact, it happens that they mistakenly pick up someone's buckets or plastics, and when the owner notices it, they often react violently. "Yesterday, some people chased me and hurt me with a knife" (Samson, 05/06/2021). At the time of the interview, Samson was still recovering from the injury. Even though that unforeseen accident was caused the loss of the boy's minimal savings, it was "mentioned with relative acceptance, if not pride" (Thieme, 2013). This case demonstrates how the concept of a hustle economy encompasses both the acceptance of risk and the freedom inherited from it. These livelihood strategies face the uncertainty in the absence of secure formal employment by creating new structures of opportunity and forms of adaptations. In a context where "employment is scarce but "work (beyond industrial labour production) is everywhere" (Thieme, 2018), the analytical frame of the "hustle" economy can be useful to research urban precarious environments. The uncertain futures navigated and shared by young people of the Global South and Global North shows the positive dimension of the hustling as a productive activity and a way of employing "skills, agencies, and resourcefulness that are constantly being carved out in times of adversity and scarcity" (ibid.:15). The proximity to waste of some groups, which allows the daily re-production of the urban space, reveals the condition of marginality and exclusion of some social groups in urban contexts (Bauman, 2007). But this marginal condition in relation with waste shows also, not only what is lacking in informal economies, but also what is working for the urban poor: the "business of waste" (Thieme, 2010).

From the findings of my research, informal recycling provides employment and a livelihood for a portion of young Congolese urban refugees. Giving visibility to this activity could expose the difficulties of urban refugees and create the opportunity to formalize the structure as a business, as dreamed by Manu. The emergence of these forms of informal economy could allow many undocumented urban refugees to be registered through the recognition of the community service they provide in the absence of a public and heterogeneous one.

> Those people take the recycling as a business, not as a mission, not because they want to save the environment. But this can help us. The authorities should recognize Congolese are doing this job and give some help" (29/06/2021).

Conclusion

The essay presents the difficulties for the socio-economic integration of Congolese refugees in Kampala. Lack of documents, the opaque bureaucratic process to obtain them, and the difficulty in finding employment exacerbate the vulnerability of Congolese refugees. If the anonymity of the city

allows them to assume new identities which can provide physical security and engage in different types of economic activities compared to the rural location of settlements (Fábos & Kibreab, 2007), all these difficulties restrict the rights of refugees in Uganda, whose hosting model is commonly known as one of the most progressive in the world. In the urban context, refugees become marginal objects on the global stage, whose mobility and capacity for action is restricted as an unconceived presence in the national refugee policy organization. Despite their precariousness, young Congolese refugees bring complex daily and collective survival strategies into play, such as the recycling of items. Young people's agency in the context of migration, contributes to the collective livelihood of households, in the attempt of carving out new spaces of participation in social and family life. Their condition shows the importance of strengthening local and national knowledge about forced migration in urban settings, activating local communities for advocacy, and recognizing the need for humanitarian category formation.

Acknowledgements

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List of acronyms

CBO   Community-based organizations

GRL   Ghetto Research Lab

IDP   Internally displaced persons

OPM   Office of the Prime Minister