

No End in Sight. The wickedness of global displacement or how refugee crises are enacted over time. ¹

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ABSTRACT

This study investigates organizational practices that constitute and intensify wicked problems over time. While the literature has focused largely on how organizations respond to wicked problems, less attention has been given to how such responses may perpetuate wicked problems. Drawing on Weick's concept of 'Enacting as Intensifying', our longitudinal ethnographic case study of refugee crises in Central Africa highlights how the standard solution to refugee crises, encampment, intensifies displacement over time. We found that camps were gradually turned into violent social hotspots, which fuelled conflict and further mass migration. We also shed light on recent alternative practices to potentially de-intensify the situation. Our insights advance two theoretical contributions. First, we conceptualize the underlying practices of wicked problems' inherent intractability and self-perpetuation as *spatial and temporal containment*. Second, we theorize practices that show how organisations can become more attentive towards their own, so far unexplored, capacities to de-intensify the situation, referred to as *temporal and spatial diffusion*. In so doing, we enhance scholarly understanding on the underlying process that may constitute and intensify wicked problems in extended time-space settings such as global and enduring displacement.

¹ Authors contributed equally and are listed in alphabetical order. This is a working draft. Please do not cite without the authors' permission.

INTRODUCTION

This paper outlines how encampment, as the standard response to refugee crises, can prolong and intensify displacement over time. While displacement is often perceived as temporary, refugee crises prove stubbornly persistent having a duration of 20 years on average (Betts & Collier, 2017; de la Chaux, Haugh, & Greenwood, 2017). As crisis prolong, camps turn into miserable social hotspots and recruitment grounds for terrorists, thereby fuelling conflict and further mass migration.

We refer to displacement as a global wicked problem, and in line with nascent research on wicked problems conceptualize them as persistent social problems that have no clear solution or end in sight (Dorado & Ventresca, 2013; Ferraro, Etzion, & Gehman, 2015; George, Howard-Grenville, Joshi, & Tihanyi, 2016; Holt, 2004; Reinecke & Ansari, 2016). This emergent research has shown how wicked problems require original organizational responses, including entrepreneurial activity to tackle extreme poverty (Mair & Marti, 2009; Mair, Martí, & Ventresca, 2012) or distributed experimentation and evaluation to confront climate change (Ansari, Wijen, & Gray, 2013; Ferraro et al., 2015). Other studies have investigated how organizations may tame wicked problems by constructing responsibility frames forcing businesses to actively engage with a humanitarian crisis (Reinecke & Ansari, 2016).

However, while these emergent studies explored how organizations may respond to wicked problems, less attention has been given to how such responses may enact and perpetuate the wicked problem over time. Accordingly, scholarly understanding remains underdeveloped in relation to the following interrelated issues: How are wicked problems enacted over time as organizations are responding to them? In particular, which types of organizational practices may intensify wicked problems on the one hand, and de-intensify them on the other hand?

We draw on Weick's (1988, 2009) ideas on 'Enacting as Intensifying' to understand the interrelating dynamics between organizational practices and the intractable nature of wicked problems. Weick argues that actions to respond to an initial triggering event often intensifies the situation, because *"our actions are always a little further than is our understanding of those actions, which means we can intensify crises literally before we know what we are doing."* (Weick, 1988: 308). Action is therefore not only an attempt of controlling, but a means to learn about the situation, making an unknown environment more understandable. The concept of enactment thus highlights that the act of exploring an environment is not neutral, but it influences

what is being explored. Accordingly, enactment comprises both a process, the practices of enactment, and an outcome, namely an enacted environment. In organizational responses to complex wicked problems, where cause-and-effect relationships and interrelationship between actors and issues are poorly understood, the quick and incautious pursuit of actions can unintentionally make things worse.

An enactment perspective hence offers a path to empirically explore how the predominant standard solution to refugee crisis, encampment of refugees, intensifies and prolongs the displacement situation over time, leading to long-term and protracted wicked problems. In particular, refugee crises are wicked in the sense that with every attempt to solve the initial crisis a new issue arises, as the continuous encampment of thousands of refugees often creates more misery and despair than their initial displacement. Moreover, displacement scenarios are extremely unique, taking place in different countries with different actors and political constellations involved. While the conditions of a refugee crisis might look similar from a distance, the root causes, processes and implications will vary significantly between different contexts. Given the uniqueness of each situation, standardized solutions are problematic (Rittel & Webber, 1973).

We studied such process of intensification through a longitudinal ethnographic case study of Global Aid², an international aid organisation, and its response to refugee crises in Central Africa. Over a period of three years, we engaged in participant observations (156 days), conducted interviews (115) and analysed archival documents (16). In our findings, we elaborate on how the initial encampment to assist Congolese refugees exposed people to prolonged misery, aid dependence and recruitment by rebel groups over time. Further, we describe how Global Aid's new policy on 'Alternatives to Camps' assisted the Rwandan office to realize these problematic consequences of encampment, which prompted alternative local practices such as cash-based assistance or mobile money.

We advance two theoretical contributions to the literature on wicked problems (Alford & Head, 2017; Ferraro et al., 2015; George et al., 2016; Holt, 2004; Reinecke & Ansari, 2016). Firstly, we specify the constitutive practices (Rouleau, 2005) of the inherent intractability and self-perpetuation of the wicked problem, which thus far remain insufficiently researched and under-theorized. In particular, we unpack processes of intensification as *spatial and temporal*

² We call the organisation Global Aid for confidentiality reasons.

containment, referring to practices to control the situation and rendering it more understandable. The detrimental consequences of such containment are however difficult to realize in extended timespace settings, such as global displacement.

We secondly show how realizing the consequences of containment allows organisations to be more attentive towards their own, so far unexplored, capacities to engage in alternative practices to de-intensify the situation (Gioia, 2006; Sutcliffe, Brown, & Putnam, 2006; Weick & Sutcliffe, 2007, 2015). We refer to these practices of de-intensification as *temporal and spatial diffusion*, disrupting forms of containment that were initially established to confront, and understand, the situation.

In the next section, we discuss extant literature before introducing our theoretical perspective. We continue by introducing our empirical case as well as methodology followed by an illustration of our findings. We conclude by outlining the theoretical contributions.

THEORETICAL POSITIONING

Wicked Problems and Organizational Responses

For organizational scholars interested in large-scale social issues, the concept of wicked problems³ has become of increasing interest in recent years (Dorado & Ventresca, 2013; Ferraro et al., 2015; George et al., 2016; Holt, 2004; Reinecke & Ansari, 2016). In their original formulation of the term, Rittel & Webber (1973) specify a variety of properties distinguishing wicked problems from other, more ordinary, problems. In particular, they use the term ‘wicked’ in a meaning akin to that of “‘vicious’ (*like a circle*)” (Rittel & Webber, 1973: 136) referring to the often intractable nature of these problems (Churchman, 1967). One key element of wicked problems is that there is no clear and conclusive definition of the problem to be addressed (Dorado & Ventresca, 2013). Wicked problems are instead defined by an ever-evolving range of interrelated issues, variables and constraints. As a result, it is impossible to understand the problem until a solution has been attempted, which in turn commonly exposes new aspects of the problem (see also Mair & Marti, 2009). Another property is that each wicked problem is unique.

³ We agree with Ferraro et al.’s (2015) notion that the terms ‘wicked problems’ and ‘grand challenges’ share a strong family resemblance, however our study specifically mobilizes the term wicked problems to foreground the intractability and self-perpetuation of these empirical phenomena.

Therefore, possible responses not only have to be custom-made, but organizations usually also lack experience in terms of the specifics of the wicked problem (Camillus, 2008). And while Rittel & Webber (1973) specify that solutions to wicked problems cannot be defined as right or wrong, they can clearly deteriorate and intensify the wicked problem. This puts significant pressure on organizations as actions commonly have disproportionately large consequences, making experimentation risky and difficult to undo. Finally, given that there are no clear solutions, there is also no clear ending to wicked problems. As a result, it is extremely challenging for organizations to decide at which point to disengage.

In light of what George *et al.* (2016) call a world besieged by ‘grand social challenges’, the concept of wicked problems resonated in important ways with organizational scholars interested in such complex social issues. Studies have in particular elaborated on different responses to wicked problems, such as taming processes (Camillus, 2008; Reinecke & Ansari, 2016), dealing wisely (Termeer, Dewulf, Breeman, & Stiller, 2015), coping with (Holt, 2004; Watters, 2017) or tackling wicked problems and grand challenges (Ferraro *et al.*, 2015; George *et al.*, 2016).

With a specific interest in the taming of wicked problems, Reinecke & Ansari (2016) for instance describe how NGOs were constructing a responsibility frame that forced businesses to actively engage with issues surrounding a humanitarian crisis in the Democratic Republic of Congo. Drawing from Goffman’s (1974) work on framing, Reinecke & Ansari (2016) show how multiple contentious ways of framing the wicked problem eventually solidified into one as NGOs convinced consumers and policy makers that businesses were actively implicated in the complex humanitarian crisis. In a similar vein, Holt emphasizes coping strategies that organizations may mobilize to respond to challenges presented by wicked problems (Holt, 2004). Drawing insights from psychoanalysis, Holt proposes that managing risk for wicked problems requires an enhanced understanding of epistemological biases that can blind organizations to emerging challenges. Accordingly, such an approach could strengthen an awareness of risk management’s limitations and foster imagination of and preparation for multiple possible futures, Holt argues. Other studies have foregrounded the notion of tackling wicked problems and grand challenges through robust action (Ferraro *et al.*, 2015). Inspired by pragmatist approaches, robust strategies to tackle for instance climate change and poverty alleviation include novel forms of participatory architecture and distributed experimentation that generates small wins (Ferraro *et*

al., 2015). Combined, emergent studies have thus elaborated on different responses to wicked problems. However, in light of Rittel & Webber's (1973) original specification that organizational actions can intensify and further complicate wicked problems, less attention has been given to how such responses may enact and perpetuate the wicked problem over time. Accordingly, we are guided by the following research interest: How are wicked problems constituted over time as organizations seek to respond to them? And more specifically, which types of organizational practices may intensify wicked problems on the one hand, and de-intensify them on the other hand? To explore these concerns, the study draws on Weick's ideas (1988) on 'Enacting as Intensifying' as we will detail further below.

Enacting as Intensifying

Weick argues that in crises, actions to respond to the situation often leads to unintended intensification as "*understanding is facilitated by action, but action affects events and can make things worse*" (Weick, 1988: 308). In formulating this process, Weick builds upon the underlying idea of enactment, contending that when people act, events and structures are brought into existence. In this context, a differentiation is made between enactment as a process, 'enacting', as well as enactment as a product, the 'enacted environment'. Enactment gains a specific meaning in situations of crisis. Facing acute or triggering events (Shrivastava in Weick, 1988: 309), actors are required to act quickly and often do not know what the appropriate action could be until they have already responded to the situation (Weick, 1988). Accordingly, action is not just conceived as an issue of re-establishing control, but instead it becomes an epistemological concern which shapes how people build a novel understanding about an unknown situation, which is in turn re-constituted through the act of discovery. However, such spontaneous reactions might ultimately make things worse.

This perspective hence offers a path to focus on processes of action and adjustment over time as a way of understanding how an initial response to an acute situation, and given the urgent need to act, intensifies the problem over time, ultimately leading to an 'enacted environment' of long-term and chronic displacement. It thereby allows for a deeper investigation of the underlying practices (Rouleau, 2005), constituting the intractability or self-perpetuation of wicked problems that needs to be taken more seriously in current considerations of wicked problems, such as global displacement. Facing an unknown situation such as an acute refugee

influx, organisation's responses to the crisis often precede their knowledge and understanding of the situation, thereby risking to prolong the crisis and to make things worse. In line with the notion of enactment as intensifying, this impulse towards quick action frequently leads to a strategic overestimation of organizational capacities and an underestimation of the danger of actively causing further harm. Such actions have disproportionately large consequences and are difficult to undo especially in extended timespace settings, when organisations are standardizing their responses across crisis situations worldwide. The consequences of such practices are difficult to realize as unfolding across different locations and over a longer time period.

Once realized, a focus on the consequences of intensification however offers important insights to remedy a common organizational blind spot and raises awareness. If organizations become more aware that their own actions can form an integral element leading to worse outcomes than before, this increased awareness can lead to more attention towards their own, so far unexplored, capacities to potentially de-intensify the situation (Gioia, 2006; Sutcliffe et al., 2006; Weick & Sutcliffe, 2007, 2015). Once the situation is perceived to be in control, an actor is able to discover retrospectively that "*part of what he is dealing with are consequences of his own making*" (Weick, 1988). In other words, while the analysis of such an intensification process suggests that organisational actions may enact a wicked problem over time, it may also help to identify how organisations can manage it to lower levels of intensity.

Displacement is often perceived as if produced by higher forces. However, above perspective allows us to make apparent organisation's active role in constituting it over time. We outline this in the empirical setting of long-term and chronic displacement in Rwanda. Below, we illustrate our research context and empirical approach.

METHODOLOGY

Research Context and Design

Currently, 65.3 million people are forcibly displaced, with 21.3 million defined as refugees (UNHCR, 2016). While our attention often focuses on acute crises, such as the sudden mass migration of Syrian refugees in 2015 or Rohingyas seeking refuge in Bangladesh in 2017, global displacement is not a temporary phenomenon. In fact, millions of the world's refugees are trapped in chronic exile, for often more than 20 years on average (Betts & Collier, 2017). Such

protracted displacement scenarios are defined as situations in which refugees find themselves in a long-lasting and often ‘intractable state of limbo’ (Crisp, 2002) where their basic rights and essential economic and social needs remain unfulfilled over years in exile. Empirical examples include Palestinian refugees who live in refugee camps in the Middle East for over 60 years (Frey, 2010) or Congolese refugees being displaced across Central Africa for over 22 years now (Feldman, 2007). While protracted displacement situations are a common wicked problem across the globe, the situation is particularly detrimental in Africa (Crisp, 2002). Studies have reported that *“the circumstances and conditions of Africa’s long-term refugees have changed significantly - and in almost every respect changed for the worse - over the past two decades”* (Crisp, 2002: 1). Such conditions mainly refer to refugee camps confining people in unhealthy and unsafe conditions and exposing them to increased numbers of sexual violence and abuse over years (de la Chaux, Haugh, & Greenwood, 2017).

We trace the practices of how these refugee situations changed for the worse, by focusing on the predominant and standardized response to refugee crisis, encampment. Empirically, we therefore engaged in a longitudinal ethnographic case study of an international aid organisation, we call Global Aid, and the Congolese refugee camps in Rwanda. We decided for an inductive approach as it excels *“in situations for which there is limited theory and on problems without clear answers”* (Eisenhardt, Graebner, & Sonenshein, 2016: 1113).

Data Collection

Over a period of three year, the first author gained insights into Global Aid’s operations in the Congolese camps in Rwanda as well as its global Headquarters. Our main sources of empirical material are participant observations (156 days), interviews (115) as well as archival documents (16) as we will further detail below. An overview of the different empirical materials and a chronology of the data collection is provided in Table 1.

Insert Table 1 about here

Participant observations. Our main source of empirical insights is based on participant observations in Rwanda as well as at Global Aid’s Headquarters. Participant observation here

refers to situations where “*the researcher assumes the role of a member of the organization*” (Czarniawska-Joerges, 2007: 15) as the first author was working alongside Global Aid’s staff. We first engaged in fieldwork at Global Aid’s Headquarters. In March 2014 and between October 2014 and February 2015, the first author was part of a collaborative project⁴ evaluating education programs in refugee camps worldwide. Here we were able to recognize Global Aid’s standardized response to refugee crisis worldwide as in setting up refugee camps. Organisation-wide guidelines for instance specified how each local office should set up refugee camps.

In 2015, the first author gained access to one such local refugee response in Rwanda. From August to November 2015, she observed Global Aid’s operations across five different Congolese camps that portray different levels of ‘protractedness’. The oldest camp was established in 1996 already, with the newest camp built in 2014. For our empirical analysis, and in illustrating our findings, we mainly focus on the oldest camp. This direct fieldwork access allowed the first author to observe what other studies described as “*changes for the worse*”, witnessing extreme poverty and high levels of violence in these camp settings. This fieldwork phase followed two additional weeks in November 2016.

All observations were captured in field notes differentiating between ‘pure observations’ as well as ‘reflective thoughts’. The hand-written field notes were digitally recorded and comprise 70 Word pages (11pt, Arial). An overview of the five different refugee camps is provided in Table 2.

Insert Table 2 about here

Interviews. At the same time, we also conducted interviews. These interviews followed a semi-structured interview guideline that was adapted after every round of data collection. Each interview lasted between 30 min and 2 hours and all were recorded and transcribed verbatim. They were mainly face to face and conducted in the immediate working space of the interviewee, ranging from tents in refugee camps to boardrooms. In a few occasions, we relied on Skype calls. In order to gain a broad spectrum of how Global Aid was responding to refugee crisis, interviewees were selected across the different functional areas as well as across hierarchical levels, including senior field officers and interns. One intern was for instance wondering why Global Aid still treats long-

⁴ The collaborative work was part time and took place on site as well as online through virtual working groups.

term crisis like acute emergencies. In addition, we also interviewed staff of Global Aid's local partner organisations, for instance discussing how Global Aid's One-Year Budget cycle is influencing their work.

Archival data. In addition, we collected different types of archival documents. Interestingly, one policy that several interviewees referred to was the organisation's newly introduced 'Alternative to Camps' policy. This policy became a central reference point for our study, prompting us to pay more attention towards recent developments in addressing refugee crises in new ways. From a pragmatic point of view, reading reports, strategies and policy briefs also facilitated discussions with interviewees especially at the beginning of our fieldwork. Familiarizing with Global Aid's language, often consisting of acronyms and abbreviations, was essential to be taken seriously in the field and to have meaningful conversations.

Data Analysis

We purposely collected observations and interviews at different points in time to be able to analyse the empirical data in between and constantly compare the data with new emerging theoretical insights. In doing so, we were able to identify our next interview partners or focus our observations more specifically. For each round of analysis we followed a three-level coding process (Corbin & Strauss, 1990a; Corbin & Strauss, 1990b; Locke, 1996; Suddaby, 2006). This process was computer-supported using the software Atlas.ti (Gephart, 2004: 459). During the first phase of open coding, all the empirical material was labelled in order to break down the existing data, aiming at developing substantial codes that help to describe or classify phenomena (Corbin & Strauss, 1990b; Flick, 2009: 423). These comprised of, for instance, activities that staff members were doing to assist refugees in an acute crisis (*'handing out blankets'*). In the second step, the phase of axial coding, these open codes were then minimized by merging similar codes and by relating single codes as properties to overall categories (Corbin & Strauss, 1990a: 114). For instance, open codes such as *'handing out blankets'* and *'providing water'* were grouped together and labelled *'acute crisis distribution'*. In the third step, the selective coding, the categories were further refined by demonstrating relations between the single categories (Flick, 2009: 312). For instance, we linked the broader category of *'acute crisis distribution'* to categories that were describing how such assistance was organized, namely in *'centralized camp sites'*.

This analysis resulted in two narratives, the first one outlining how refugee camps worsened and intensified the displacement situation. The second narrative then describes how the organisation dealt with the consequences of such intensification and is now seeking to enable alternative practices to potentially de-intensify the situation.

PROTRACTED DISPLACEMENT SITUATIONS IN RWANDA

Rwanda is currently host to around 72.000 Congolese refugees, some of them ‘parked’ in camps for 22 years already. While refugee crisis are usually perceived as temporary, the responsible Camp Manager recognizes that they are now facing long-term and chronic displacement situations:

“And so, we recognize that we have long staying refugees. We cannot really escape that, that's pretty much a fact.” [int]

As evident in this statement, Global Aid considers such chronic displacement scenarios as a given fact. Our data however outlines how responding to the initial crisis was constitutive in prolonging the displacement scenario over time. In what follows, we detail how the initial encampment of Congolese refugees was crucial in providing assistance and protection to people as well as to gain a better understanding of the chaotic crisis situation. However, due to an extremely restricted time horizon, based on Global Aid’s belief that they are dealing with a temporary crisis, the initial camps turned into violent social hotspots leaving refugees more vulnerable than before, often being recruited by rebel groups and thereby fuelling further conflict. Recently having recognized these enactment processes, Global Aid was promoting a new policy called ‘Alternatives to Camps’. In Rwanda, this policy for instance prompted investment in online, in lieu of centralized, assistance to mitigate the consequences of the initial encampment policies. In illustrating our findings, we use insights from our ethnographic case study and label observations as [obs], interviews as [int] and archival documents with [doc].

Responding to Acute Refugee Crises in Rwanda

Initial encampment enables assistance and an understanding of the situation. In responding to the influx of thousands of Congolese refugees in 1996, Global Aid established a centralized refugee camp in the West of Rwanda. The rationale for establishing such a refugee camp is

twofold. On the one hand, centralized campsites are crucial in facilitating the rapid provision of life-saving assistance to numerous people in need. During one of the camp visits, the responsible field officer explains that it is indeed much easier to distribute water, food packages, stoves and blankets when people are located in one central space [obs]. In addition, as Congolese refugees were fleeing rebel groups from Eastern DRC, the refugee camp provided security and protected the vulnerable population. Global Aid's standardized 'Handbook of Emergency Camp Management' emphasizes this dual mission of refugee camps:

"Camps for refugees and the internally displaced are often established for security reasons and to ensure that humanitarian agencies can easily monitor the situation and deliver humanitarian assistance." [doc]

On the other hand, encampment further allows Global Aid to get a better understanding of an initially overwhelming and chaotic crisis situation. When Congolese refugees were first crossing the international border to Rwanda, it was for instance very difficult to grasp the numbers or needs of all these people. However, containing them in central camp locations allowed Global Aid to register every new arrival and to better identify their needs:

"The establishment of camps can also facilitate the identification of people with specific needs and the delivery of services to them." [doc]

Underlining the encampment approach is the belief that the crisis is of temporary nature. In that vein, Global Aid's primary goal is to repatriate refugees back to their home country as soon as possible. A senior programme manager refers to this as the traditional solution to refugee crisis:

"To make the long story short, actually the traditional way to think about solutions, or the preferred solution, is repatriation" [int]

This belief in the short-term nature of refugee crisis is further manifested in Global Aid's One-Year Planning cycle that limits all programming to one calendar year. At the same time, this One-Year budget cycle allows to flexibly respond to unforeseeable crisis outbreaks. In Rwanda, it for instance allowed the office to flexibly respond to the sudden influx of Burundian refugees in 2015. The programme manager explains that the One-Year Planning cycle allowed the operation to flexibly adapt their budgeting and funding appeals, incorporating the additional resources required to respond to this new crisis [obs].

Intensifying Refugee Crises in Rwanda over time

One-Year Planning cycle prolongs encampment. While the One-Year planning cycle enables a quick and flexible response to acute crises, it re-enacts the same emergency response, encampment, even when the essential reasons for its existence have long passed. A senior consultant critically admits that the organization's One-Year cycle presents a huge excuse for the organization to re-enact the same programmes year after year:

“So, at [Global Aid], we have a distinct disadvantage but also a huge excuse to continue to do work as we know it, because of this one-year budget cycle and program cycle.” [int]

As a result, these camps often remain persistent beyond the initial emergency phase, thereby limiting the rights and freedoms of refugees:

“While camps are an important tool for [Global Aid], they nevertheless represent a compromise that limit the rights and freedoms of refugees and too often remain after the emergency phase and the essential reasons for their existence have passed” [doc]

The local field officer highlights that the continuous, but short-sighted, provision of emergency food and blankets renders people completely dependent on aid. Eventually, they will lack any skills or resources to get out of the situation:

“We cover the basic needs [...] but if we continue providing water and food, there will be dependency; there will be no solution. The assistance needs to come with some durable solutions, but if you plan only on the money that you have, you never think of durable solutions. You don't assess the end strategy; what you need to do is to give vocational training and give people some means to get out of the situation before its gets protected.” [int]

On the other hand, the One-Year cycle limits funding prospects. The finance officer clarifies that short-term budgets are fine for one-off expenses such as tents, but not for ongoing assistance such as water that needs to be provided in a sustainable and long-term manner:

“And that's always tough because our budgets are very short-term. If we talk about procuring tents, emergency short-term shelter, those kind of activities we can afford to think about in terms of the next six months. But otherwise it becomes inhumane to provide refugees with the standard 20 litres of water per day for three months and then find that we can't do it long-term.” [int]

While Global Aid's One-Year Planning cycle allowed for much needed flexibility in responding to acute crisis situations, over time this response became a problematic part of prolonging the Congolese encampment situation, thereby turning these camps into violent social hotspots as we will detail below.

Prolonged encampment intensifies misery and violence. Over time, the Congolese refugees got used to a constant reduction of assistance as a senior field officer explains. He describes a process of how Global Aid created poverty in those camps:

“So, what actually happens is that over time, your refugee problem goes like this: at first you start to cut assistance, you cut positions [...] Fifteen years after the emergency, you have a community that did get used to less, a constant reduction of standards. First, the health post that closes and all these things, right? [...] and in terms of work force they become weaker and weaker. There's less education so they become less and less qualified and in the end there's less and less food, so what kind of work force is that? What you actually do is you create poverty.” [int]

Such prolonged misery and poverty turns camp sites into dangerous and violent hotspots. In the Congolese Camp, staff members for instance recorded higher incidents of rape, prostitution or child abuse than outside the camps. A senior protection officer critically comments on the increase of such sexual and gender-based violence (SGBV) over the last couple of years and argues that, ultimately, the organization is investing in programs to mitigate the social problems they themselves created:

“You actually create a social hotspot. So SGBV, the prevalence of SGBV increases. So we say there's a big issue on SGBV. So we run SGBV program, we run child protection program. [...] Then you say, "Oh, strange. Prostitution is increasing." [...]. Actually, the resources you have, you start investing them on mitigating the result of creating a social hotspot, right?” [int]

In addition, the Congolese camp populations is facing tensions with the surrounding community. Most of the camps in Rwanda, but also in other parts of the world, are located in the poorest areas of the country and most of the services provided to refugees are still above the living standard of the surrounding neighbourhood. Global Aid's livelihood officer is concerned that Congolese people might have a better deal than the poorest Rwandans, ultimately creating refugees or incentivising refugees not to go home:

“I think in a country like Rwanda, I think there's almost something wrong with refugees having a better deal than the poorest Rwandans in terms of access to..., not wrong but I can see problems with that. And, also in terms of creating refugees or incentivizing refugees not to go back or to come.” [int]

In addition, the perceived short-term nature of refugee crisis is also evident in some of the infrastructure in the camps. As we walk through one of the Congolese camps, the local health officer points to the sanitation facilities and explains that these toilets were not designed to last for such an extended time period. Initially they were constructed to last a couple of months.

Today, they are in use for more than 22 years already. He for instances shares about a recent incident where a broken pipe polluted the camps drinking water, and hundreds of children as well as older people got infected with intestinal worms or typhoid [obs].

A similar sensitive, however rarely discussed, concern relates to child recruitment. Especially staff working in education and child protection witnessed that children are disappearing from the camps. They could only speculate about their observations of black busses in the camps and the whereabouts of missing children, however seemed to agree that these children were most likely being recruited by rebel groups from neighbouring DRC [obs]. One field officer sarcastically comments that this is rarely a surprise given the hopeless and miserable situation inside the camp [obs]. Such observations are consistent with findings from other refugee camps around the world (Betts & Collier, 2017).

‘Alternatives to Camps’ in Rwanda

Interestingly, in 2014, Global Aid introduced a new global policy titled ‘Alternatives to Camps’ that explicitly recognizes the detrimental consequences of camp assistance in prolonging refugee crises over time. In particular, the policy admits that, over time, refugee camps undermine refugee’s self-dependence, they spark tension with the local host community and expose vulnerable populations to even higher risks of sexual violence and prostitution:

“[Global Aid’s] experience has been that camps can have significant negative impacts over the longer term for all concerned. Living in camps can engender dependency and weaken the ability of refugees to manage their own lives, which perpetuates the trauma of displacement and creates barriers to solutions [...]. In some contexts, camps may increase critical protection risks, including sexual and gender-based violence (sGBv), child protection concerns and human trafficking.” [doc]

We learned about the ‘Alternatives to Camps’ policy as a senior protection officer in Rwanda mentioned it during one of the interviews. He asks if we had already heard about this new policy and brings it up on his PC [obs]. He emphasizes that the policy is an attempt to deal with the rising numbers of protracted camp situations worldwide. He shares this critic, however wonders if the organisation might have needed to create those camps in order to realize that they were wrong:

“Probably, you had to create that [refugee camps] to realize that the whole approach was wrong. And, I'm not saying that it's an institutional failing but if you look at the migration to Europe and the European countries, it is exactly the same [...] So, probably what you could say, alternatives to camps is the future.” [int]

Acknowledging how encampment worsened refugee's plight, the policy encourages each local office to seek alternatives to camps whenever possible, as outlined in the preamble:

"[Global Aid] 's policy is to pursue alternatives to camps, whenever possible, while ensuring that refugees are protected and assisted effectively" [doc]

While emphasizing the organization's accountability to refugees, the policy acknowledges that centralized camps are often not the best way to assist and protect them:

"[Global Aid] will always retain its accountability for ensuring that the needs of refugees are met, but camps are not the only, or often, the best mechanism for the delivery" [doc]

A colleague recalls that a delegation from headquarters introduced the 'Alternative to Camps' policy to the Rwandan tea,. She vividly remembers the meeting as an eye-opener, as the policy finally provided a way to put existing initiatives and new practices into perspective. While the office had been trying to do things differently, the emphasis on 'Alternatives to Camps' actually provided an overarching frame for these efforts:

"So we had HQ colleagues come down to present it [policy]. And afterwards, we were like 'Wow', this was made for us. Because we did not have a proper frame. We knew we were bridging to development, we knew we were talking about solutions, we knew where we wanted to be, but this philosophy actually frames it really well across the board" [int]

Acknowledging that refugees are in most cases not returning home, she agrees with the new policy and the ambition to find alternative responses:

"And, if the reality now is that people actually don't return, then you might as well think about something different [...]this is where the idea to convert camps into settlements came from, to bring development actors to these areas, that's where the idea emerged "

And while encampment is a standardized solution across the globe, alternatives to encampment need to be context-specific, taking into account a country's national policies, legislation, its culture as well as the camp's neighbourhood:

"The possible alternatives to camps are also as diverse as the refugees and the communities, cultures and laws and policies of the countries where they reside. They will be defined by the degree to which refugees are able to exercise their rights, such as the ability to move freely, choose where to live, work or open a business, cultivate land or access protection and services." [doc]

A senior protection officer, previously stationed in Thailand, highlights that alternatives to camps look very different in Rwanda, where refugees are able to integrate into the national labour market:

“For example, in a country like here where you have freedom of movement and integration possibilities and education system and the right to work, you can do that. You go to a country like Thailand where you don't have the right to work, you don't have the right to education, then your only option is a camp. But even then you can have a good reason to have a few more alternatives to camps.” [int]

To pursue local alternatives to camps in Rwanda and thereby mitigate the negative consequences of earlier encampment, the Rwandan office shifted to a ‘Multi-Year planning cycle’. This shift allowed the local team to see more of the unfolding situation as well as invest in cash-based assistance, in lieu of centralized camp assistance, to disperse the intensified camps. Below, we describe these practices in more detail.

De-Intensifying Chronic Refugee Crisis in Rwanda

Multi-Year Planning Cycles enables a wider time horizon. Inspired by ‘Alternatives to Camps’, the Rwandan office persistently, and successfully, requested to be part of a pilote for multi-year programming. This allows the office to think more progressively and widely about alternatives to the Congolese camps as a local consultant explains:

“Two weeks ago, we were approved to be a pilot operation for multi-year programming, and that is important. Because that, I mean, our initial thinking has been, okay, how can we get up to speed in terms of thinking more progressively about Congolese camps.” [int]

Implementing this more long-term planning cycle inspired more visionary and progressive thinking in the office. A colleague for instance recalls a small brainstorm session where staff members, for the first time, felt encouraged to envision a more sustainable and long-term strategy for their operation, ideally dismantling all camps until 2030:

“I was referring to that small brainstorm session where we started that conversation. We said, we will have no camps, and we might say that's the vision for 2030, but just the fact that we're talking about it ... And then we also started to think ‘Oh so what would make that happen?’ Then we can backtrack a little bit and say, so what would that mean. Sensitizing internally that you ideally you'd be out of work in ten years from now and it feels scary because there's not gonna be a camp.” [int]

Building upon such long-term perspective, the team is enabled to question and re-imagine the organization’s purpose. So far, the office only considered displacement to be solved once all refugees return back home. However, a senior program manager suggests that the organization should now have two books, the assistance book and the refugee book, with the primary aim to get refugees ‘off assistance’, rather than ‘returned’:

“Right now, we're sort of saying, "We can only write refugees off our book once they're no longer refugees." And we should sort of have two books. We should have the assistance book and the refugee book. And, so we can write people off the assistance book once they become self-reliant [...] As far as I could remember the convention, there's no explicit mentioning that [Global Aid] needs to provide forever the services.” [int]

Given more predictable and longer budget outlooks, Global Aid also becomes a more reliable partner in negotiations with the Rwandan government and other development actors. The finance officer explains that now the organisation is able to speak the budgeting language of the government:

“Now we have multi-year budget, so we have multi-year plans, I've been thinking that we match the budget cycle of the government. Because that will also enable inclusion in terms of finance. So that we speak, you know, according to the budget cycle of the government of Rwanda.” [int]

In the Rwandan context, being able to see more of the unfolding situation through Multi-Year planning cycles as well as financial stability allowed the office to invest in alternatives to centralized encampment, such as online cash-assistance, as we will detail below.

Cash as alternative to in-kind assistance. Rather than providing in-kind items such as blankets or food, cash-assistance is about providing refugees with money, mostly through bank accounts, as mobile money or credit cards. In 2016, some Congolese refugees started to receive money on their mobile phones. Such cash-assistance promotes alternatives to camps as Global Aid is able to assist refugees independent of a centralized distribution site. A logistics manager explains that in-kind distributions Aid require a central camp location. But with cash, refugees only need a bank accounts or a mobile and can leave the camp, as already witnessed in Gihembe Camp:

“And, as long as you do in-kind food distributions you somehow need distribution sites, right, and you come back every month to the distribution site and it needs a camp because you organize the population to the distribution site. But, the day you switch to cash, that's a bit the reality at the moment, then you just need a bank account.” [int]

His colleague confirms this reasoning, arguing that cash basically disconnects refugees from the distribution site and thereby enabled alternatives to camps:

“You can do alternatives to camps because you have cash-based assistance. So, I think the shift to cash is actually really interesting [...] it's about disconnecting the community from the distribution sites” [int]

In one of our interviews, a senior camp officer envisions that by 2020, new refugees will not be put in camps anymore:

“So, for the future, let's say we are today in 2020, five years after the ‘Alternatives to Camps’ where all the new influxes don't go to camps.” [int]

However, the operation would still need to deal with the thousands of refugees already contained in camps. He is hoping that cash-based assistance would allow refugees to leave the camps and seek opportunities elsewhere:

“So we sorted out the issue for the future but you still have all these camps across the world that you have established over the past fifty years and what do you do with these camps? Maybe anyway, that's what you see here, right? If you look at our population profile now, we have 140,000 refugees in protracted camps where we could actually... well, if we shift to CBI [cash-based interventions] and if we give them cash probably you could actually trigger change and some would decide to move out of the camp to look for opportunities somewhere else” [int]

And even if some refugees might be too vulnerable to leave the camps, cash-assistance would hopefully transform refugee camps into more active villages or settlements:

“So, over the years, you will reduce your in-kind population and probably down the road in 2026 you remain with part of your present camp population that didn't move out because they are just too vulnerable and then you can bring in the economic actors and say, ‘What about that camp or that remaining of the camp? Can we shift that into maybe modern village, resettlement, like maybe in Uganda?’ “ [int]

A recent discussion with a Rwandan company that produces clean cook-stoves would foster such transformation. The local livelihood officer explains that she recently approached the company suggesting they could broaden their customer base to include refugees, as they are now receiving cash:

“So, Inyenyeri [name of company] for instance is a company that is already present in Rwanda, it's been here for ten years, they have a factory in Gisenyi, have a lot of Rwandan clients. And, all we are asking them is to include refugees as clients. So, we're not trying to reinvent, we're just asking them to include refugees with the exact same business model [...]. We just started giving them cash, they have cash. You've got a product, you got to sell it.” [int]

Pursuing alternatives to camps in the form of cash-assistance is especially effective in a country such as Rwanda. Here, the banking system is quite advanced and opening bank accounts for thousands of refugees was possible, in contrast to some other countries as the senior programme officer explains:

“We negotiated with equity bank to make sure that they open bank accounts for refugees. If you want to be an economic actor, you need to be able to receive transfers, make transfers; you need a bank account number. But here, the system is quite advanced [...] so that helps a lot as well. You go to West Africa where corruption is endemic and it's different...” [int]

In the future, staff could envision to widen online assistance beyond cash. If, at some point, Congolese refugees are scattered across the country, staff members imagine ‘online helplines’ to check in with people:

“You can use mobile phones in terms of checking in on people. Let's say all the refugees live out of camp and completely scattered around the entire Rwanda, then we would not have the capacity to keep visiting all households on a regular basis but we would have capacity to have their phone numbers and send them mass text information once a week with information once a month. And then have a hotline where they could call when they are in trouble or somehow if they got arrested or at danger of being refouled. I think there's certainly a lot of ways to get around that.” [int]

Combined, this section outlined how several of Global Aid’s alternative practices led to a diffusion instead of a further intensification of the situation. Despite the severe intractability of the camps, the new planning cycle offered a possibility to reflect on the severe consequences of encampment, prompting investments in cash-based assistance that may render refugee camps useless over time. The theoretical implications of this process are further developed in the discussion.

DISCUSSION

Intensifying and De-Intensifying Wicked Problems

Wicked problems, such as displacement, climate change or natural disasters, are increasingly common phenomena, disrupting lives of millions of people worldwide while extremely difficult to manage due to its chronic persistence. While research so far mainly explored how organizations may respond to and tame such challenges (George et al., 2016; Houghton, 2015; Reinecke & Ansari, 2016), our study outlines how organizational responses to initial crisis can be constitutive of and enact wicked problems over time. Abstracting from our empirical findings, we suggest two theoretical contributions to the literature on wicked problems and grand challenges. We first advance understanding of the constitutive practices (Rouleau, 2005) that underlie the intractability of such wicked problems (Alford & Head, 2017). In particular, we

specify the practices of intensification as *temporal* and *spatial containment*. We additionally suggest that organizations can mitigate the consequences of their initial intensifications, theorizing de-intensification as *temporal and spatial diffusion*.

While such processes of intensification were so far mainly studied in limited time-space settings (Weick, 2010), such as gas leaks (Shrivastava, 1987; Weick, 1988) or isolated bushfires (Weick, 1993), we specify these insights for extended time-space settings, such as global and enduring wicked problems.

Spatial and Temporal Containment: Intensifying wicked problems

Abstracting from our findings, we refer to temporal and spatial containment when organizations seek to control and better understand an initially unknown and overwhelming situation.

However, over an extended time period, these containment practices led to numerous unintended consequences, drawing attention to the severe limitations of overly rigid and standardized approaches to engage with the complexity of wicked problems.

Spatial containment. In the wake of an acute crisis and given the urgent need to respond, a common organizational response is to centralize decision-making to exercise control and to be perceived as in ‘in charge’ of the situation (Boin, Stern, & Sundelius, 2016; Peters, 2011). Especially governments and aid organizations want to be perceived as in control of immigration flows and centralized camp assistance visually indicates that something is being done about the situation. The centralized camp solution thereby serves the purpose of signalling to the public that the refugee flow is a relatively isolated and remote problem, as refugees get “*bundled off in camps*” (Kleinschmidt, 2017). Other studies have similarly referred to refugee camps as totally encapsulating their inhabitants (de la Chaux et al., 2017a). At the same time, containing such an escalating situation in a specific space is often perceived as helpful in rendering an unknown setting more understandable (see Weick, 1988).

Accordingly, by deceptively suggesting that the situation is contained in an isolated space, the standardized encampment approach prevents timely detection of emergent problems before they magnify (see Weick & Sutcliffe, 2015). Even more problematically, through the creation of static camp structures at the outset of the displacement the standardized encampment approach actively works against the emergence of more contextually appropriate solutions.

Accordingly, the overly fixed approach to manage the wicked problem largely inhibited the ability for experimentation and adjustments, fortifying the conditions leading to intensification over time. Organisations however are likely to miss the problematic consequences of such intensification if extremely limiting time horizons blind actors' perceptions.

Temporal containment. We refer to temporal containment as practices that limit an organization's perspective to a narrow planning horizon. In our case, Global Aid's One-Year planning cycle overly emphasized the acute crisis situation. As a result, actors are hardly able to see their current activities in a wider temporal setting, by and-large neglecting past as well as future implications of their daily work. This meant that programmes were designed and implemented in the first year of each acute displacement crisis, and then mostly repeated year after year. This enacted short-termism manifested a dominant 'Care & Maintenance' approach in our case, which privileged short-term emergency relief efforts to the detriment of more future-oriented programmes. In consequence, refugees still received emergency food packages 20 years after their initial displacement.

In addition, such limited planning horizons and urgent pressures rarely allow staff members to look back and assess the past, detrimental consequences of their actions. While encampment proved useful in the first year of the emergency, it prevented actors from detecting and comprehending the unintended effects of refugee camps on displaced populations and regional stability in the medium and long term.

Problematic notions of timing have been previously observed in other studies on wicked problems, where actors are often accused of making decisions that "*reflect very short time horizons.*" (Levin, Cashore, Bernstein, & Auld, 2012: 128). However, as soon as an organization becomes committed to the view that a problem is temporary and short-term, the possibility that it might actually be long-lasting will not be entertained until the crisis is at an advanced stage. In the case of Global Aid, the stubborn belief that refugee crisis are temporary became a positive illusion (Weick, 1993) that proved harmful not only for refugees being parked in refugee camps for decades, but also contributed to the fuelling and prolonging of regional conflicts and violence. As the organization's understood its mission in quickly assisting in acute emergencies, this focus further complicated learning on how to conceive of and deal with long-term and

protracted displacement scenarios. This process of containment unfolds a particular prominence when enacted in extended time-space settings as we will illustrate below.

Containment in extended time-space settings. In seeking to control as well as understand chaotic situations, organisations often rely on standardized responses, of particular prominence in extended time-space settings such as global displacement. Here, organizations are dealing with unpredictable and sudden migration across geographically spread crisis locations. However, especially in such large-scale wicked problems, where the interrelationships between variables and actors are regularly opaque, such standardized and inflexible approaches to contain the situation are insufficient to anticipate its numerous unintended consequences (see Rittel & Webber, 1973).

Standardized responses can have particularly wide-ranging implications when they are enforced by powerful actors that are trait-making in their capacities (Hirschman, 1967). Hirschman defines trait-making organizations as entities that influence and constitute other organization's structures and practices in a specific field. In our case, Global Aid is trait-making in two ways. On the one hand, the organization is operating across refugee crises worldwide and each local office follows the organization's standardized protocols and operating procedures, such as the Emergency Handbook to set up refugee camps. On the other hand, the organization is imposing its practices and structures on local implementing partners. In so doing, the local partners for instance re-enact Global Aid's temporal structures (Orlikowski & Yates, 2002) by following Global Aid's One-Year reporting cycle. Once established, such standardized responses are difficult to undo, having created strong path dependencies. This resonates with Levin's considerations of interventions that increase the cost of reversal the longer they are in place (Levin et al., 2012). Accordingly, standardized responses are more likely to be enacted blindly in a chaotic and overwhelming situation where actors tend to rely on predispositions and preconceived ideas to make unknown environments more understandable.

Such extended time periods also often mean that one actor can hardly assess the development, and implications, of an initial crisis response, as unfolding over years. In other words, there is an extended time distance between the initial crisis response and its manifesting consequences. In limited time-space settings, Weick highlights that the "*more a person sees of*

any situation, the higher the probability that the person will see the specific change that needs to be made to dampen the crisis” (Weick, 1988: 311).

However, in extended time-space scenarios one person rarely sees a lot of any situation and it takes much longer for an organization to realize the consequences of their own doings. Practices of intensification are hence the more consequential in extended time-space settings, imposing initial response practices across multiple locations and thereby intensifying large-scale wicked problems over time. However, this paper suggests that organizations can also become more attentive towards their own, so far unexplored, capacities to engage in alternative practices to de-intensify, or at least mitigate the consequences they enacted, as we will detail further below.

Outlining the practices of temporal and spatial containment for extended time-space settings, our study specifies the underlying practices that constitute global and enduring wicked problems. In particular, it clarifies the process of such problem’s inherent intractability (Dorado & Ventresca, 2013) or stubborn persistence (George et al., 2016: 1). Our findings thereby resonate with Alford & Head’s (2017) call to better understand the ‘inner workings’ of wicked problems, which so far remained a mystery in both theoretical and empirical terms. By unpacking such inner workings through a focus on practices, we suggest that wicked problems remain stubbornly persistent and intractable as initial responses to unknown environments make the situation worse over time. We thereby shed light on a process of how organizations *become* authors of their own problems, while they are not originally authors of these problems. In the case of displacement, mass migration is often caused by civil war or natural disaster, events beyond any single actor’s influence. However, containing the Congolese refugee situation, and others worldwide, prolongs states of exile and worsens the plight of displaced populations across the globe (Betts & Collier, 2017; de la Chaux et al., 2017b).

Spatial and Temporal Diffusion: De-intensifying wicked problems

While the literature so far mainly emphasized response strategies and solutions to wicked problems, we suggest that in most cases organizations can only seek to mitigate the consequences of their previous responses, thereby de-intensifying the situation. We refer to

practices that disrupt the initial forms of containment and ultimately assist in managing it to lower levels of intensity as *temporal and spatial diffusion*.

Temporal diffusion. Our findings suggest that to mitigate the unintended consequences of their actions, and to stop performing the same deceptive response practices over and over again, organizations need to extend their temporal horizons to engage more strategically with long-term wicked problems. While a ‘tunnel vision’ is an understandable reaction to the unknown environment presenting itself in an acute crisis, our case suggests the need for heightened awareness from the outset (Weick, 1984, 1988). For example, in our case the local office in Rwanda adapted a Multi-Year planning cycle that provided a wider time horizon, allowing staff members to reflect on the negative effects of refugee camps and concentrated capacities to imagine alternatives to camps. One of the significant initial outcomes of the engagement with the ‘Alternative to Camps Policy’ was that it made actors see and acknowledge unintended implications of the encampment solution, noting for instance that Global Aid’s “*experience has been that camps can have significant negative impacts over the longer term for all concerned.*”

Recognizing the long-term nature of camps also forced actors to entertain the possibility that the crisis will not be solved in the near future, resembling a frame shift (Reinecke & Ansari, 2016) of what needs to be addressed. Accordingly, practices of temporal diffusion made actors realize the detrimental consequences of their work and thereby acknowledge their own active involvement in having prolonged the wicked problem over time. This resonates with Weick’s illustration that “*when people develop the capacity to act on something, then they can afford to see it.*” (Weick, 2006: 1724). Organizations are able to see alternative ways of responding to wicked problems once they develop the capacity to pursue alternative solutions. In Rwanda, this small change in the way actors engaged with notions of time fostered the conditions for the development of an alternative, context-specific approach to the Congolese situation; it prompted an exploration of cash-based assistance instead of centralized assistance, as we will describe below.

Spatial diffusion. Once actors are able to see more of the wicked problem, there is a greater probability that they will also see more places where and how intervention can make a difference in the future. In our case, the Rwandan office was piloting online cash-based programs. In doing so, the operation is seeking to disconnect refugees from the centralized camp sites, thereby

reducing tight-coupling and interactive complexity (Weick, 1988). Receiving cash instead of food packages or blankets, Congolese refugees are now able to engage in activities beyond the immediate camp zone, and for instance can buy groceries at the surrounding community markets. In addition, Global Aid invited private sector companies into the camps to include refugees as their customers. Ultimately, the Rwandan office is seeking to use online assistance to completely diffuse refugees across the country, hoping to make centralized camp sites redundant. Another such diffusing practice in Rwanda was to integrate refugee students in the national school system, rather than building parallel schools in the camps. Here, refugee students were admitted to the neighbouring Rwandan schools, in return Global Aid built classrooms for this school. These alternative practices of diffusion however need to take on different forms and shapes depending on each wicked problem's local instantiation.

Diffusion in extended time-space settings. While problems surrounding containment are magnified through standardized responses reinforced across the globe, we suggest that diffusion practices in turn necessarily need to be context-specific, taking serious the unique nature of each local instantiation of a wicked problem. In our case, practices to diffuse and disentangle displacement scenarios are for instance dependent on the host country's legal system, the funding situation of the local office or political and media attention to the situation. Global Aid's office in Rwanda for instance invested in online cash-assistance, being aware of the conducive political and legal structures in Rwanda that allowed refugees to own a bank account. In addition, mainstreaming refugee education was possible as the Rwandan government is more favourable to refugee's inclusion into their national education systems than other host countries. In other countries, Global Aid is for instance trying to more strongly involve development actors in refugee camp settings, thereby sharing responsibilities across different actors (Feldman, 2007). We suggest that 'alternative responses' to global wicked problems hence need to refrain from standardized solutions and actively acknowledge organisation's constitutive role in intensification.

So far, organisations, and organisational scholars, predominantly perceive wicked problems as a given fact that needs to be tackled and solved. George et al. for instance suggest that “*solutions to GCs typically involve changes in individual and societal behaviors [...]*” (George et al., 2016:

2), while Eisenhardt et al. highlight that “*grand challenges*’ are highly significant yet potentially solvable problems” (Eisenhardt et al., 2016). The notion of ‘solving’ wicked problems however implicitly suggests reverting back to a previous state where the problem did not exist. At Global Aid, the traditional, and most preferred solutions to refugee crisis was the repatriation of all refugees back to their home countries.

Our insights however suggest that ‘there is no reverting back’, as processes of chronic intensification can hardly be undone and refugees are unlikely to return to a country after 20 years of being contained in camps. Global and enduring wicked problems might hence not be ‘solved’ in the traditional sense currently propagated in both practice and theory. We however show that heightened awareness might allow staff members to recognize and mitigate their own doings, thereby engaging in alternative practices, such as cash-assistance. While cash-based programmes do not lead to the ‘big’ solution of voluntarily repatriating all refugees to DRC, the Rwandan office is now foregrounding “*small wins*” (Ferraro et al., 2015; Weick, 1984) that at least de-intensify the plight of long-term refugees.

CONCLUDING REMARKS

As highlighted by Dorado and Ventresca (2013: 69) “*wicked problems are not solved only re-solved over and over again*”. Our case of Global Aid allowed for a systematic investigation of how global displacement as a contemporary wicked problem is constituted over and over again, thereby outlining practices of intensification, as well as de-intensification. While our study unpacked the practices of intensification in the context of global and enduring displacement, insights from our perspective should not be limited to this empirical terrain. Future research could therefore explore how and in what way intensification may unfold in contexts of other contemporary wicked problems, including persistent inequality, environmental degradation or climate change. Relying on such insights thereby offers a hopeful orientation (Gioia, 2006) that organisations have enough capacities to mitigate the wicked problem they enacted.

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Appendix

TABLE 1
Overview of Empirical Material and Data Collection

	Phase 1 HEADQUARTERS	Phase 2 HEADQUARTERS	Phase 3 RWANDA	Phase 4 RWANDA	TOTAL
<i>Timing</i>	<i>March 2014</i>	<i>Oct-Feb 2015</i>	<i>Aug-Nov 2015</i>	<i>Oct 2016</i>	
<i>Empirical Data</i>					
Participant Observation (in days)	5 (Full-time on site)	80 (Part-time on site and online)	60 (Full-time on site)	11 (Full-time on site)	156
Interviews	13	17	51	34 (8 by Skype)	115
Archival materials	5	4	5	2	16

TABLE 2
Overview Congolese Refugee Camps in Rwanda

Name of the Camp	Displaced Population	Level of Protractedness
Kiziba Camp	17,155 Congolese Refugees	22 years (since 1996)
Gihembe Camp	14,205 Congolese Refugees	21 years (since 1997)
Nyabiheke Camp	13,918 Congolese refugees	13 years (since 2005)
Kigeme Camp	18,646 Congolese refugees	6 years (since 2012)
Mugombwa Camp	8,320 Congolese Refugees	4 years (since 2014)