

‘Disordered surroundings’: money and socio-economic exclusion in Western Kenya

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In April 2015 I was sitting outside Dorothy Akinyi’s house near Kaleko,¹ a small market centre between Kisumu and Kisii, watching some children playing football under Western Kenya’s hot sun. Suddenly the children, among them sons and daughters of Dorothy’s brothers-in-law Patrick Ochieng and William Oliech, started to argue with each other. Although I could not understand every word of their conversation as I was sitting more than 15 metres away, I heard them constantly repeat ‘*Onge future*’ (‘There is no future’). While initially surprised to hear such disenchanted slogans from pre-adolescents, I soon remembered that Dorothy, a fifty-year-old primary school teacher, had often shared with me glorifying memories of a pleasant past and grim assessments of a dark present. Taken together, these suggest that she supports the children’s pessimistic evaluation of their future. Dorothy not only often talked melancholically about her own youth in Nyakach, but also seemed to agree with the diagnosis that times have changed and nowadays even ‘working hard’ (*tiyo tek*) would not automatically lead to a life without ‘struggling’ (*chandre*).

Dorothy is not alone in having a bleak perspective on current economic opportunities. While discussing a previous version of this article with Antony, her youngest brother-in-law, he told me that the ‘surroundings have changed’ (*piny olokore*)² since his childhood, that the world nowadays is ‘messed up’ (*piny onjaore*). Although resembling nostalgic statements made by older people all over the world, and probably particularly so in an Africa that has been subjected to neo-liberal structural adjustment programmes and a radical downsizing of the public sector since the 1980s (Ferguson 2006; Piot 2010), recent statistical data compiled by the Kenya Institute for Public Policy Research and Analysis (2013) suggests that Dorothy’s and Antony’s diagnosis is accurate. In counties mainly inhabited by Luo, the underemployment rate is way above the national average, while the unemployment rate is below the national average. Luo participate in the economy without partaking of its fruits or, as the name of a butchery near Kaleko bears testimony to, their ‘surroundings weigh heavy’ on them (*piny pek*; see Figure 1). What could be interpreted as a nostalgic and traditionalist outlook on reality that assumes the moral collapse of a once harmonious rural idyll is thus rather a consequence of the disorder in which *jo*-Kaleko (people of

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¹Names of places and individuals are anonymized.

²Finnström (2008) offers an apt analysis of the Acholi term *piny* as ‘surroundings’. Alternative translations are ‘world’ or ‘land’ (Geissler and Prince 2010). While the term ‘surroundings’ highlights the importance of *piny*’s potential to immediately influence *jo*-Kaleko’s daily lives, it risks being understood in a spatially too narrow sense, excluding, for instance, the offices of Kenya’s political and economic elite.



FIGURE 1 Butchery near Kaleko. Photograph taken by the author, 17 April 2015.

Kaleko) find themselves and in which they make sense of the socio-economic situation.

With the purpose of further unpacking Dorothy's and Antony's assessments of the economic reality of Western Kenya, I will explore their connection with a change in the ways in which money is categorized that has taken place since the early 1980s. This discussion will illuminate that *jo*-Kaleko nowadays experience the disorder of their surroundings not only as being worse but also as being fundamentally different from before. While Parker Shipton diagnosed the existence of *pesa makech* ('bitter money'; Shipton 1989), thirty years after his fieldwork in the early 1980s, during eleven months of fieldwork that I primarily spent in Dorothy's brothers-in-law's homesteads (2009–15),³ I did not meet anyone familiar with the

³Dorothy's homestead is one of three that are built around the homestead of Josphat Ooko, who died in 2010. His wife, Philister Achieng (died 2015), gave birth to three daughters and five sons. While the daughters were married outside Kaleko, the eldest son, the husband of Dorothy Achieng, had died in 2001 and the third son in the late 1990s. Two other sons, William and Patrick, have now built their homes immediately next to their father's. The youngest son, Antony Ouma – who, since his mother's death, has been the owner of his father's home – works and lives in North-western Kenya, which allows me to use his house as my base whenever visiting Kaleko, as I did in February–April and August–September 2009 with my colleague Sebastian Schellhaas, and again in August–September 2012, February–April 2013, March–April 2014, February–April 2015 and August–September 2016. I further visited mostly, although not exclusively, Luo friends and family members living elsewhere (Kakamega, Migori, Siaya, Ahero, Sindo, Kisumu, Nairobi and Mombasa). Although I am aware of the fact that my 'discontinuous' form of fieldwork deviates from the ethnographic ideal, it resembles the movements of an educated 'son' who returns to his rural home whenever his financial status and the situation allow him to do so. Also taking into account that, over the years, I stayed in contact with some *jo*-Kaleko by mobile phone and, if possible, by using Facebook or email, I am confident in saying that my fieldwork started in August 2008 when I first met Antony Ouma away from his home

concept. *Pesa makech* has been replaced by the more diffuse notion of *pesa marach* ('bad money'), which, instead of describing one specific type of money, functions as an overarching category under which several types of money are subsumed, among them *pesa mabandia* ('fake money'), 'wicked money' and *pesa nono* ('free money').

In order to situate this shift, I start with a recapitulation of Shipton's study. This allows me to sketch out the specific understanding of disorder underlying the concept of *pesa makech*: a confusion of the relations between people that can be 'sorted out' (*rieyo*, or disentangled, straightened or corrected) by members of individual homesteads (*dala*) because they themselves locate its cause inside the *dala*. I then turn to the ways in which *jo*-Kaleko nowadays describe their socio-economic situation. Feeling that their environment, from a moral, political and socio-economic perspective, is steadily declining due to the general form or state of the economy as well as due to the actions of politicians, members of other ethnic groups and greedy *jo*-Kaleko, they tend to situate the cause of the disorder of their surroundings outside the *dala* and thereby outside their sphere of influence. This by no means all-encompassing relocation of the cause of disorder – every now and then, one meets a 'stubborn' defender of former times and the ways used to deal with disorder back in the 'analogue age' – necessarily entails modifications of the ways of dealing with it (Whyte 1997: 204) and, as a consequence, also changes how 'bad money' is represented.

In addition to the 1980s preoccupation with *pesa makech* that corresponds to an understanding of disorder located inside the *dala* (however, see Cooper 2012 on strategies to cope with conflict employed among homestead members today), I focus on three principal patterns in how the experience of, attempts to deal with and monetary representations of disorder relate to one another ethnographically. The first pattern revolves around today's anxiety about circulating 'counterfeit money' (*pesa mabandia*) and the fear of an excess of money allegedly fed into Western Kenya's economy to cause inflationary processes. These fears are analysed as signs of an increased feeling of economic exclusion, triggering attempts to upscale the rules governing the homestead to the level of the body politic. This attempt to upscale the rules leads to a politicization of everyday life and to a quotidianization of politics, especially during politically heated times such as before, during and after elections (Bayart 1996; Schatzberg 2001).

I go on to analyse discourses about a specific subcategory of *pesa marach* ('wicked money'), which seduces its owner to spend it on unnecessary things, as an index of *jo*-Kaleko's political disenchantment and compliance with interminable exclusion from arenas of value production. This 'endorsement' of exclusion

in Nairobi and has continued since then. Josphat Ooko's family considers itself the original owner of the land around Kaleko (*wuon luwo*) and could be described as belonging to a 'rural elite'. William runs the local clinic; Patrick attempted but failed to become contestant for the position of County Ward Representative; and the husband of Dorothy taught at a Kenyan university before his death, as do some of the homestead's daughters and their husbands. While living in Kaleko, I gained most of my data by sharing my life and by 'deeply hanging out' with its residents, especially with members of the late Ooko's home. Initially, my focus was on transformations of Luo food traditions since colonial times. However, the pervasive extension of culinary metaphors to the economic and political sphere forced me to enlarge my scope and led me to engage with the problem of the disappearance of *pesa makech*.

and disorder, on the one hand, brings with it a celebration of ‘thugness’, but, on the other – and paradoxically – it seems to involve an attempt to increase social cohesion by upholding the formal logic of the rules regulating prosperity and growth. This is accomplished by employing these rules for organizing and spreading the absence of value by ‘struggling’ (*chandre*) in and through radical economic and political uncertainty (on social navigation, see Utas 2005; Vigh 2009).

In contrast to the strategies of upscaling and struggling, which are mutually exclusive forms of approaching the principles underlying *rieyo* (broadening or negating their applicability), relativizing the scale of *rieyo*’s applicability is the third strategy employed by *jo*-Kaleko. It is no longer only the extended family of the homestead that emerges as the prime targets of ‘sorting out’, but also other social actors such as the individual or the nuclear family. This relativization of *rieyo*’s applicability is mirrored in discussions about *pesa nono* (‘free money’ or ‘money gained without effort’).⁴ In a classificatory sense, *pesa nono* is considered ambiguous: people are constantly debating what money can and should be described as ‘undeserved’. The applicability of the notion of *pesa nono* is thus highly contested, as is the sphere of *rieyo*’s applicability.

The discussion of these patterns complements, on the one hand, Cooper’s analysis (2014) concerning the strategy of ‘trying one’s luck’ (*temo hape*) while remaining ambivalent about one’s chances in an uncertain world,⁵ and, on the other, Geissler and Prince’s ethnography *The Land is Dying* (2010), which is pre-occupied with the difference between so-called ‘saved Christians’ who adamantly reject ‘Luo culture’ to engage in forms of religiously inspired individualism and those Luo who attempt to preserve ‘Luo culture’ by reinstating traditional concepts (Ogutu 2001).

What might appear to be a too neat distinction between Luo then and Luo now, between *pesa makech* and *pesa marach*, between economic inclusion and exclusion, should not, however, be understood as a scholarly elucidation of a clearly discernible historical shift.⁶ Rather, I like to think of it as a narrative and analytic scaffold that helps clarify and contextualize a feeling among *jo*-Kaleko that is gaining ground without solely applying to Kaleko’s youth (Prince 2006; Christiansen *et al.* 2006; Durham 2000). In that heuristic sense, it seems fair to say that the change in the discursive embedding of money allows me to conceptualize how a considerable part of Kaleko’s population perceives the opportunities the politico-economic situation offers them. Instead of having a feeling of being able to adjust the ‘disorder of their surroundings’ – understood as a socially, politically and economically unwanted and unexpected situation in which value production, growth and development (all captured by the Dholuo term *dongruok*)

⁴*Pesa nono* also denotes money that does not have to be spent on daily necessities (*pesa mar kuon* or ‘money of porridge’) and therefore can be disbursed freely (Schmidt forthcoming).

⁵While Cooper focuses on children who hope to get a ‘sponsor’, many *jo*-Kaleko ‘try their luck’ in Nairobi, Kisumu or, like Bill, a nephew of Dorothy and trained mechanic, in South Sudan.

⁶Parker Shipton reminded me that much of what I say about *pesa marach* and *pesa nono* resembles discourses he had witnessed in the 1980s and early 1990s. I do not question that *jo*-Kaleko have been in contact with money at least since the early twentieth century, that they always had a diversity of ways to describe it, and that they have been engaged in a struggle against economic exclusion since colonial times (Carotenuto 2006; Cohen and Odhiambo 1989; Hay 1972; Northcote 1907: 66; Oswald 1915: 52; Whisson 1964).

are inhibited – many *jo-Kaleko* voice an increased fear of being pushed into disorder by actors who reside outside their sphere of influence. In other words, Kaleko's and Western Kenya's 'geographies of exclusion and inclusion' (De Boeck and Honwana 2005: 1) have drastically changed from both a macro-economic and an emic perspective. Contemporaneously, and partly triggered and enforced by the political disenchantment set in motion by the general election of 2013, uncertainty about the precise cause and nature of disorder as well as about the means and ways of tackling it has increased tremendously. It is not only the future that seems no longer easily imaginable, but also the present that is more difficult to make sense of and to navigate (Cooper and Pratten 2014; Haram and Yamba 2009; Hutchinson and Pendle 2015; Weiss 2004).

The relationality of *pesa makech*: reversible disorder

According to Shipton (1989; 2007), *pesa makech* denotes money gained in an amoral way: by selling ancestral land, killing someone, stealing or buying votes. It is money acquired by selling objects that are constitutive of sociality: other human beings, ancestral land and political influence. Objects bought with 'bitter money' are socially destructive and anti-reproductive. Houses built with *pesa makech* might collapse, cows might die and the employment of bitter money as part of bride wealth might result in the death or barrenness of the wife. Yet it is not the money that is bitter, but the relation between, for instance, the person selling ancestral land, relatives who could claim that land, the ancestors and the money. If one buys a radio with *pesa makech*, the bitterness does not travel with it: 'If bitter money continues to circulate ... the danger is not thought to circulate with it, but sticks with the one who committed the evil act and with his family.' The bitterness is thus 'an attribute of people' (Shipton 1989: 42).

Acts that led to bitter money in the 1980s can be analysed as having one thing in common. They all 'block[ed] pathways' (*dino yore*; Geissler and Prince 2010: 113–50) of flows inside a social body constituted by a net of finely woven relations between its members. The order of this network is upheld by rules (*kweche*) regulating marriage, harvesting sequences, sexual behaviour, obligations to give and receive, and many other things (Geissler and Prince 2010). If one therefore selfishly sells something that plays a constitutive role in what one is according to one's relational position in that finely woven net of relations and rules, one risks causing an imbalance in the way one is related to others, and thereby might bring about 'confusion' (*nyuandruok*) that subsequently leads to death and infertility.⁷

As the 'bitterness' results from a relational disorder within the immediate social environment, it can be 'sorted out' (*rieyo*) by sacrificing a bull. After those

⁷As it is the disorder of the body one inhabits that is at stake and not any essential property of the money one possesses, it becomes clear why the money does not remain bitter when circulating. The assumption that bitter money is a mere sign of a violation of a rule organizing social relations is furthermore verified by the fact that the concept of bitterness is applied to other objects as well (among them stolen vegetables; see Oyoo *et al.* 2008; Kurimoto 1992).

homestead's members who are most likely to be affected by the misconduct of the owner of bitter money have eaten the meat, an *ajuoga* (ritual specialist) mixes chyme (*wen*) from the sacrificed animal's intestines with herbal medicines (*yath*). The owner of *pesa makech* takes a sip and afterwards the *ajuoga* sprinkles the money, the houses of the homestead and its ground with the rest of the mixture (Shipton 1989: 40–2). In line with an understanding of the social body as an ordered net of relations, this ritual can be interpreted as a form of materially re-ordering parts of the disordered body of the homestead (*dala*; on the Luo homestead, see Dietler and Herbich 2009), whose unity and order are re-emphasized by sprinkling the amorphous substance of chyme, water and herbs on it.

In conclusion, one can say that *pesa makech* signalled reversible transgressions of the moral order (*chik*) but never indexed a substantial threat of the latter's applicability. Precisely because the cause of disorder was situated inside people's immediate and known environment, possibilities of 'sorting it out' remained available. The increasing reference to *pesa marach*, however, seems to indicate a process that differs from the reversible transgression of *chik*. Rather than expressing an illicit internal disordering of the social body epitomized in the homestead, the displacement of 'bitter money' by 'bad money' appears to speak of a displacement of the cause of disorder from an internal, potentially controllable one to an external, radically uncontrollable one (scrutinized in the next section).

The oblivion of *pesa makech*: externalizing the cause of disorder

With small farms, dwindling farm produce, individualism, high prices of goods, an exclusively money economy, unpredictable political and economic environment, homesteads are no longer communal. The world is complicated. We are more individualized; we produce less from the farms; there is a lot of competition in getting income-generating work; people from other places control the market and the economy.

This quote from Antony, a secondary school teacher who, in addition, is pursuing a master's degree in English literature, exemplifies a common narrative. Due to the shortage of land (Shipton 2009), increasing population density (Population Reference Bureau 2011), climatic change (Ochola 2009), electoral violence (Mueller 2008), reduction of cattle herds, stockpiling debts, the pressure to acquire food for one's kin and structural adjustment reforms (Rono 2002), money has become a necessary part of survival in Western Kenya today more than ever. It has become 'simultaneous with life', as one *ja-Kaleko* phrased it aptly. It dovetails with money's quotidianization that *jo-Kaleko* now perceive *pesa* acquired by selling votes or ancestral land, neatly packed into plots measuring fifty times a hundred feet, as unexceptional and no longer describe it as 'bitter'.⁸ People do not explicitly address the issue of money's origin and the

⁸One reviewer reminded me that, although discussions on *pesa makech* no longer take place in Western Kenya, debates about *chira*, a wasting disease (Parkin 1978), definitely do. I think that there are two reasons for this: the widespread acceptance of the inevitability of selling cows and land due to the overall poor economic situation in and around Kaleko, and the externalization of the cause that led to the sale in the first place, namely the greed of other people. The question is thus: how could *pesa makech* have been upheld as a concept at a time when almost everybody

money itself remains morally untainted. As one young and unemployed *jo-Kaleko* regretfully said: 'Money is money.' The money's origin does not matter as long as it enables you to survive. If I asked *jo-Kaleko* about the motives behind and the consequences of the sale of ancestral land, they never referred to a concept even remotely resembling *pesa makech*. Rather, they sympathized with the seller by pointing towards his economic inability, they mentioned promising ways of investing the money from the sale, or they alluded to governmental plans to force people to sell their land below market value. Others engaged in explicitly anti-monetary discourses by contrasting the 'exclusively money economy' of today with a barter economy that many believe was still predominant in the middle of the twentieth century. Another way of vilifying today's 'bad money' is by ironically comparing its huge denominations with its worthlessness or by evoking times during which small amounts of money could still buy valuable goods, such as the land of Edward Odhiambo, the thirty-year-old son of William's grandfather's brother and an unemployed father of two girls: 'This land was bought with 1,200 shilling by my grandfather. Nowadays, even if I would have 1,200 shilling, what could I buy for it?'⁹

The simultaneous processes of 'accepting' money's ordinariness and 'blaming' money's devilish nature are accompanied by a relocation of the cause of socio-economic disorder. More and more people locate the cause of 'disordered social surroundings' beyond the homestead, and thus outside most people's immediate sphere of influence. The two main targets of such externalization are members of other ethnic groups and employees of the state, such as former President Mwai Kibaki. As Dorothy explained to me shortly before the general election of 2013, Kibaki 'sneaked around Kaleko during the nights with fake money. Have you never heard someone knocking at your door during the nights? That might have been Kenyatta. He is now copying Kibaki. He tries to buy our votes and might want you to spy on us.' Along similar lines, Edward more than once denigrated the Kikuyu¹⁰ by referring to their 'natural' tendency to be aggressive, egoistic and money-loving: 'You cannot marry a Kikuyu woman, she will run away with all your valuables. That are the Kukes, they love money.' Such ethnic hatred also becomes manifest in Facebook groups such as 'The Luo Nation' and 'Luo Nyanza Arise', which have mushroomed in recent years and portray Kikuyu and Kalenjin¹¹ as animals and sodomites. This pervasive attitude

was forced to sell land or cows? In contrast to *pesa makech*, which was conceptualized as a result of extracting money in the wrong way, *chira* can exist as an explanatory model dealing with misfortune that has economic consequences but not an economic cause. People, for instance, can be infected with *chira* because of incestuous behaviour or neglecting marriage sequences between brothers.

⁹Macro-economic data shows that inflation skyrocketed in the 1990s, which once more proves that Edward's diagnosis and other *jo-Kaleko*'s feeling of massive currency depreciation is accurate (Isaksson 2001).

¹⁰The Kikuyu, numbering 10 million (in contrast to approximately 6 million Luo), are Kenya's largest ethnic group and are concentrated in the centre of the country. For a historical account of the tense relationship between Luo and Kikuyu, see Odhiambo (2004) and Haugerud (1993: 38–44). Cutting a long story short, one can say that a majority of *jo-Kaleko* feel that they have been politically sidelined since independence.

¹¹The Kalenjin number roughly 5.5 million. Although many *jo-Kaleko* considered *Lang'o* (a derogative Dholuo term meaning 'thieves' or 'deceivers') as political allies during and after the

against other ethnic groups directly influences daily discussions and discourses. An argument between the same children whom I had heard shouting ‘*Onge future*’, for example, revolved around the question of whether Kenyatta’s red eyes are a consequence of him being a demon, an alcoholic or a cocaine addict.

Returning to the historical trajectory of *pesa makech*, it seems valid to conclude that its oblivion correlates with an externalization of the cause of disorder beyond *jo-Kaleko*’s immediate sphere of influence. A situation in which a reversible disorder of social relations affected available money tokens has been replaced by one in which the long and painfully felt absence of money brought about by external actors is perceived as the inexorable cause of a dramatic, if not irresolvable, socio-economic disorder. It is no longer *another* part of the net of relations that threatens the integrity of the social body, as in the case of *pesa makech*, but *an other* who threatens to cut that net of relations into no longer connected parts. To what extent some *jo-Kaleko* understand this trend as inevitable becomes manifest in an argument Patrick brought up to justify the controversial practice of polygamy (*doho*), namely that for each male Luo four female ones are born because female X chromosomes have gradually become stronger than male Y chromosomes due to environmental pollution, bad food and economic struggle. As much as Patrick thereby conceptualizes economic marginalization as creeping into the genetic disposition of Luo men, money and the ‘violence of its abstraction’ (Seyer 1987) are conceived as an essential characteristic of today’s ‘surroundings’.

It can be said conclusively that the disorder brought about by *pesa makech* was an effect of an internal disorder that could be reversed by reaffirming the order (*chik*) regulating the homestead. In contrast, externalizing the cause of the disorder of one’s surroundings necessarily led to changes in the ways in which disorder is understood and how people assume it can be tackled. As ‘sorting out’ one’s homestead was no longer sufficient, *jo-Kaleko* were forced to imagine other ways of dealing with an externalized and radicalized economic exclusion.

‘Raila will sort out Kenya’: upscaling *rieoyo* and the problem of ‘fake money’

Making non-Luo responsible for the miserable state of Western Kenya’s economy and clustering around the influential politician Raila Odinga, combined with building hope in the new constitution voted for in 2010, helped *jo-Kaleko* cope with economic exclusion during my stays in Kaleko before the 2013 general election. Irrespective of whether they had or had not read the new constitution, most *jo-Kaleko* felt certain that it would enforce free and fair elections. As Edward succinctly told me after praising the new constitution, which, apart from transforming Kenya into a federal state with semi-autonomous counties, introduced biometric voter registration: ‘We now have the American style of voting. We can’t fail.’ It is thus not surprising that David Otieno – polygamist, father of nineteen children and medical assistant at Kaleko’s small local clinic run by William – told me some weeks before the election that ‘*agwambo* [the miraculous one, i.e.

2007 general election, because William Ruto, himself Kalenjin and currently Deputy President, cooperated with Raila Odinga, they have largely taken a rather sceptical perspective on Kalenjin.

Raila Odinga] will win the election and after that put Kenya back to order'. The fact that Raila is often referred to as *wuonwa* ('our father') and thereby equated with a homestead head dovetails with David's use of 'putting back to order', with which he evokes the principles of 'ordering', 'straightening out' and 'disentangling' that underlie *rieyo*.

Such equations between the political and the kinship sphere are common in Kaleko. William, for instance, argued that his third wife's temporary disappearances are a consequence of her right to 'protest in the streets'. Comparisons between the recently introduced semi-autonomous counties, which people believe 'are owned' by specific ethnic groups, and homestead clusters where brothers who are considered to be relatively autonomous are simultaneously obliged to share wealth show that equations between Kenya and a homestead should not be viewed as metaphorical. Rather, these equations between politics and kinship reflect a specific understanding of politics itself, namely one in which the political sphere is potentially subject to the same process of '(re)ordering' (cf. *rieyo*) as the kinship sphere. Kinship (*wat*) and politics (*siasa*) are not only 'interpenetrated', as Daniel Smith suggests in regard to corruption in Nigeria (2001: 345); rather, they are perceived to be structurally identical (Schmidt 2014).

It is illuminating to look at two discourses about money to substantiate the claim that it is apt to talk about an upscaling of the rules regulating the homestead to the body politic. After I had asked how Raila would 'sort out' Kenya, David told me that an urgent issue would be to get rid of *pesa mabandia* ('counterfeit money').¹² David, in line with many other *jo*-Kaleko, imagined that Kikuyu politicians printed 'fake money' to bribe Luo or to buy their ID cards in order to inhibit them from voting. *Jo*-Kaleko furthermore supposed that *pesa mabandia* would be accepted only immediately before and during the election. Thereafter, people would realize that the bank notes were counterfeit and it would thus be impossible to buy something with them. Luckily, though, Dorothy knew a fool-proof test to check if a bank note was counterfeit: one has to scrunch the bank note under scrutiny, throw it onto the ground and wait. If it unfolds autonomously, it is real money. Although the difference between *pesa makech* and *pesa mabandia* seems to lie in the latter's essential, non-removable infertility and inertness, exemplified in its inability to unfold (cf. Taussig 2010), both are believed to cause 'blockings' of pathways that could otherwise be used to create value and growth (*dongruok*). While *pesa makech* leads, for instance, to the barrenness of a woman and thereby blocks the growth of the patrilineal family, the dissemination of *pesa mabandia* into Western Kenya's economy leads to the selling of Luo ID cards and thereby 'blocks Raila's way' and ultimately inhibits the establishment of a true democracy led by a Luo politician.

While discussing the economic situation with Raymax Ooko, a teacher at a secondary school, I became aware of another discourse implicitly comparing the

¹²See, for instance, the article 'Residents scramble for Sh6m fake cash', *The Standard*, 2 March 2013. The anxiety about being economically deceived, however, has a long history in Western Kenya. The colonial officer Welby, appointed for the area in which Kaleko is situated, for instance, writes in his annual report for the year 1922: 'The circulation of so many different denominations of coinage and notes during the year has been looked on by the native as another complex form of arithmetic attended with a risk of being cheated by traders and sophisticated natives' (Welby 1922).

national circulation of money with the circulation of wealth in Kaleko's homesteads. Raymax did not buy into the assumption that Western Kenya's marginalization is a result of fake money or of what I had described to him as 'bitter money': 'There is no difference to normal money, but it is too much money in circulation. That destroys us,' he explained, embittered. 'Kenyatta' – at that time still Minister of Finance – 'possesses a machine he has stolen from America. It is so big that Kenyatta's staff had to put it in a separate room where it prints as much money as Kenyatta wants.' According to Raymax, the excess of money was supposed to destroy the 'Luo economy' by raising the prices of everyday goods,¹³ which would increase the burden of *jo*-Kaleko depending on low pay. Like an elder brother who slows down the homestead's growth by sitting on his wealth instead of marrying so that the 'path' of his successor would be opened up, the teacher's folk version of the 'quantitative theory of money supply' assumes that unregulated accumulation of wealth, in the opinion of many closely connected to the continuous succession of Kikuyu and Kalenjin politicians into political office, leads to poverty and value depreciation.

The excessive production of real money and the manufacture of fake money – which, in the view of many *jo*-Kaleko, were deliberately set in motion by Kikuyu and Uhuru Kenyatta – are understood to imprison *jo*-Kaleko in an economy that inhibits stable investment and growth. Before the election in 2013, one obvious and promising solution to handle this problem was to substitute those who were in charge with one's own. However, Odinga's electoral loss dramatically changed how the potentials of politics were evaluated. The main consequence of his defeat, without a doubt, was that many *jo*-Kaleko have become disenchanted with politics and have accepted their politico-economic marginalization; this became manifest in the slogan 'Democracy has died', which circulated in Kaleko in the aftermath of the 2013 election – often accompanied by an avowal of a bleak political and economic future. If even the new constitution, considered the pinnacle of Kenya's political maturity, could not prevent ill-minded politicians from rigging elections and stealing votes, what else could?¹⁴

'The surroundings are as they are': struggling in disorder and 'wicked money'

Many *jo*-Kaleko seem to understand that nowadays, more often than not, people are forced to appropriate someone else's wealth. 'Making business' by harming others, for instance by charging tremendously high fares when people really depend on transportation – as during elections – is no longer automatically interpreted as illegitimate. 'Eating money' (*chamo pesa*) has apparently become an accepted source of income because it often appears to be the only way of surviving.

¹³The prices of many goods dramatically rose during the last couple of years, partly as a result of a new law exempting products such as milk, newspapers, textbooks, fertilizers and mobile phones, among others, from reduced VAT (Republic of Kenya 2013).

¹⁴Strange as it may sound, one could thus conclude that the progressiveness of Kenya's new constitution enforced inter-ethnic tensions as it prevented *jo*-Kaleko from blaming the political system.

It is not the fault of individuals but a problem of an economy and a political system that fail to provide enough food, money and political influence for everybody. This resilient acceptance of the bleak politico-economic situation is captured by an expression painted on Kaleko's small bicycle repair shop: 'The surroundings are as they are' ('*Piny mana kamano*'; see [Figure 2](#)).

An incident and the way in which Dorothy talked about it illuminate how some *jo*-Kaleko navigate a world experienced as irreversibly tainted by economic failure and political impasse. While we were idly sitting around in Dorothy's living room, she casually mentioned that, during the night, some neighbours had sneaked into her field to dig out potatoes. Dorothy, however, did not show signs of moral outrage. Instead, she calmly explained that, although the neighbours should have asked her, she understands them as there would not be enough food for everybody and consequently all people are forced to 'struggle' most of the time.

The term 'struggling' (*chandre*) captures the development from a reversible internal disorder to an external non-reversible disorder aptly. In contrast to *rieyo*, which is understood as 'sorting out' disorder and 'disentangling' chaos, *chandre* signifies a form of accepting and simultaneously creatively navigating uncertainty, chaos and poverty, while brave young men, often called 'thugs' or 'hooligans', use the term to emphasize not only their hopelessness but at the same time their ability to tolerate disorder with a certain style and bravado (Vigh 2009; Weiss 2009). One archetypical 'thug' whom I met during my fieldwork in Kaleko was Wellington Ochieng, the thirty-year-old son of Dorothy's husband's first wife, who had died in the 1990s. Loving his NBA jerseys and woollen hats, Wellington, who still lived in the *simba* ('bachelor's hut') of Dorothy's *dala*, was known to be engaged in semi-legal activities and his whereabouts were a constant topic of rumours and gossip. The evaluation of Wellington's behaviour oscillated between accusations that he neglected his family responsibilities and outright enthusiasm for his cunning. His plan to 'borrow' cutlery, crockery and table cloths from Dorothy only to sell them to his uncle Patrick led to both laughter and anger during dinners to which Dorothy had invited me. From Wellington's perspective, however, such activities were the only means to 'survive' in a world that was devoid of a meaningful future. Instead of remaining in paralyzing and agonizing 'waithood' (Honwana 2012: 3–6), Wellington and other 'thugs' decide to constantly be on the move and 'try their luck' (Cooper 2014).

In contrast to Wellington, who blatantly ignores Luo moral order (*chik*), Dorothy creatively reinterprets how the relations between parts of the social body are regulated. What was conceptualized as the intra-action of value to another part of oneself becomes the intra-action of an absence of value: instead of Dorothy giving away the potatoes, her neighbours gave her the potatoes' absence (on creative debt shifting in Western Kenya, see Shipton 2010). The net of relations that had been used to open up possibilities of value production is thereby formally upheld, while it is no longer primarily the production of value that is sought but maintenance of the whole social body in the face of inevitable value destruction. Instead of backing up the belief that the possibility of reinstating order permanently lies within one's own responsibility, *chandre* – from Dorothy's perspective – forces people to recognize that any action intended to appease marginalization merely displaces the suffering to another part of society or postpones it. 'Hooligans' such as Wellington, however, disregard Dorothy's conviction that every person shifting the absence of value to another



FIGURE 2 Bicycle repair shop in Kaleo. Photograph taken by the author, 15 April 2015.

part of society has to take into account the prosperity of that part as well as carefully reflect upon the level of one's own neediness. While both Wellington and Dorothy agree that 'hustling' (*chandre*) differs from 'stealing' (*kwalo*) (cf. Chernoff 2003), Dorothy's form of 'struggling' aims at reducing the suffering of others as much as her own. Referring to *chandre* is thus, on the one hand, used to back up one's clinging to and continuing belief in *chik*, as shown by Dorothy's diagnosis that ignoring responsibility for others hazards a high risk that those neglected will suffer even more. On the other hand, references to *chandre* are used to sanction one's immoral behaviour, as in the case of local 'thugs' such as Wellington who justify blatant exploitation of others by alluding to the unknowability of the future and the necessity to survive in the present.

The pragmatic acceptance of uncertainty and economic exclusion that characterizes 'struggling' becomes manifest in a 'wicked' type of *pesa marach* that seduces its holder to spend it on 'bad things' (*gik maricho*). 'Wicked money', as Daniel Obonyo, owner of a bar in Sindo, told me, causes misfortune: one would find oneself suddenly in a bar drinking *chang'aa* (home-distilled liquor), would wake up next to a prostitute without remembering the previous night, or would lose one's wallet. Daniel emphasized that one quickly loses control over oneself whenever 'wicked money' takes hold. This constitutes an interesting difference from *pesa makech*, which fostered reflection on its expenditure because its owner knew that the money was 'bitter'. This peculiarity of *pesa makech* left the owner with the option not to spend it, for instance, on cattle for bride wealth. In contrast, 'wicked money' literally spends itself.

By ascribing agency to *pesa marach* and metonymically equipping even small amounts of money with the potential to drag people, at least temporarily, into the poverty and helplessness that are experienced as a result of an overall economic decline (Weiss 1997), *jo-Kaleko* give voice to their marginal economic position. As much as the whole politico-economic situation pushes them to the

margins of the economy (Morrison 2007), a single index of the latter – a mere 100 Kenyan shilling note of ‘wicked money’ that allows one to buy enough *chang’aa* to get seriously drunk – can lead to personal disintegration. As much as a single note thereby becomes synonymous with the whole, the whole extends beyond the control of the sum of individual actors: the ‘disordered surroundings’ can only be resiliently accepted and ‘struggled through’. While *pesa makech* left everyone who overstepped the rules of sociality with the agency to ‘sort things out’ and return to the stable world they knew and that empowered them, ‘wicked money’ signals a helplessness beyond any reliable form of economic, moral or political agency. The emergence of ‘wicked money’ and ‘struggling’ are thus effects of the same socio-economic situation. Both *chandre* and ‘wicked money’ are indexes of an experience of reality as hopeless and lacking in potential. This experience is consequently more and more normalized, ‘loses its exceptional character and in the end, as a “normal”, ordinary and banal phenomenon, becomes an imperative to consciousness’ (Mbembe and Roitman 1995: 325). It is precisely this normalization of socio-economic disorder that *chandre* and ‘wicked money’ speak of.

The next section elaborates a third, less radical solution to deal with disordered surroundings in an age of increased uncertainty: instead of acknowledging the impossibility of dealing with disorder or attempting to upscale the strategy of *rieyo* to the body politic, the actions of many *jo-Kaleko* merely suggest that the sphere of *rieyo*’s applicability has become diffuse and is no longer firmly anchored in the homestead, as in the case of disrupted relations signalled by *pesa makech*. As a consequence, many *jo-Kaleko* merely question the rigidity of the scope of *rieyo*’s applicability and try to discern that sphere of reality where uncertainty no longer or not yet rules. In other words, they attempt to uphold *rieyo*’s value-generating potential on a smaller scale. This downscaling of *rieyo* to the nuclear family, or even to one’s own individual personality, is enacted as an ethical alternative to the ‘struggling’ of ‘hooligans’ such as Wellington. Furthermore, its emergence explains why it is not only ethnic hatred that has recently spilled over but also intra-ethnic tension between *jo-Kaleko*. The exclusion, one could say, turns against those who had unquestionably been included before. In the following section, such intra-ethnic tension is interpreted as a side effect of the diffusion of uncertainty into mundane and quotidian encounters (Bonhomme *et al.* 2012). Disorder and uncertainty are no longer exclusively understood to be caused by politicians residing far away in Nairobi or Central Kenya – and probably they never were, except during politically heated moments.

‘Communal life is not there these days’: privatizing *rieyo* and *pesa nono*

While his homestead was unfenced during my first visits to Kaleko in 2009, William, a well-known *jaduung’* (honourable elder), had decided to fence it between April 2014 and February 2015 when I returned to attend the funeral of his mother, the late Philister Achieng. After I inquired why he had put up fences, William asked me if I had never heard about *jo-Kaleko* stealing cows or ravaging fields. Having painfully experienced that not all *jo-Kaleko* stick to cultural rules, William suggested that I finally build my own house in Kaleko: ‘Privacy is important. People here have not yet realized that. But it is necessary.

You should have your own house.’ Taken together, his praise of privacy and his attachment to Luo ‘values’ such as polygamy and political unity (*rivruok*) suggest that the geographical encapsulation of his family into a fenced compound can be provisionally understood as an attempt to privatize Luo order (*chik*). The fence could thus be analysed as indexing his effort to construct an enclosed ‘surrounding’ where *rieyo* and *chik* are still applicable, a secure and stable stronghold opposed to the ‘surroundings’ that William, as much as Dorothy, considers to be fraught with perils and uncertainty.

A short walk around Kaleko proves that other *jo*-Kaleko agree with William. If money is available, most new houses are furnished with iron windows and doors secured with padlocks. In addition, more and more people enclose their fields with fences and welcome the possibility of ‘hiding’ money by using mobile financial services. This turn towards privatization and securitization seems to contradict the potential of doorways and open thresholds to serve as locations where value is created (Geissler and Prince 2010: 116–22) or, as in Dorothy’s case, the absence of value shifted around. However, individuals’ choices aligned to this turn trigger contradictory responses, which illustrates that the question of who belongs to one’s ‘private’ sphere is strongly debated. During the time I resided in Antony’s house, which I used and still use as my base during fieldwork, I was, for instance, often caught up between contradictory demands connected with the opening and closure of doorways. While Antony repeatedly reminded me to close the door with padlocks whenever I left, as he suspected that some of his sisters-in-law or nephews would otherwise sneak in and ‘borrow’ some kitchen utensils or furniture, other members of the homestead accused me of being overly seclusive.¹⁵ Instead of allowing others to ‘borrow’ what they need and thereby trusting them, as Dorothy proposed, Antony opted for securitization because he feared that otherwise it would be impossible to build up a ‘good house’.

Protective measures are, however, not limited to guarding wealth in the form of land, furniture, cows and money. After telling him that I had recently discovered that people take karate classes in an otherwise unused hall next to Kaleko’s market, Jack Okech, a twenty-four-year-old student at the University of Nairobi, smiled and admitted that he had actively participated in these classes because ‘nobody can be trusted nowadays. You see, I really adore the man who invented the gun. It is great for self-protection.’ After I had asked him during one of our strolls why he thought it necessary to take care of oneself before taking care of other people, although Luo are known not only as peaceful but also as caring, he merely shook his head and cited a proverb: ‘*Dhier ma ka owadu ok moni nindo*’ (‘The poorness in your brother’s house does not hinder you to sleep’). For him and many others, ‘communal life is not there these days’, as a businessman living in Kisumu had explained to me. Not in the rural area and even less so in town, as an experience Grace Omondi shared with me illustrates.

¹⁵The same suspicion towards closure is visible in Patrick’s second wife’s demands to open and search through any closed bag or luggage I brought to her homestead – a practice that clearly contradicts William’s invocations of privacy.

Grace, a twenty-two-year-old girl from Siaya who went to Nairobi at the age of sixteen to work as a maid, often told me that Nairobians are cold and do not care about fellow Kenyans: 'It's difficult to talk to people in Nairobi. When you enter a Nissan [minibus], they will not even look at you.' After thus expressing her distress, she laughed heartily and confessed that when she had visited her rural home the last time, her mother had accused her of being 'egoistic' and 'spoiled'. Apparently, a neighbour had talked badly about Grace, because Grace had refused to converse properly with her when their paths had crossed on market day. The neighbour had told Grace's mother that Grace's conviction that she was 'something better' only because she had made it to Nairobi was unjustified. Being reminded of that incident, Grace had suddenly realized that she was accusing Nairobians of doing something that she herself had been accused of a couple of weeks before. After discussing this incident, Grace and I concluded, by now both laughing, that nowadays it is indeed difficult to evaluate the strange behaviour of others as egoistic. Caring exclusively for oneself might be the result of a free decision to act egoistically, but it might also be the effect of the socio-economic situation. Grace's experience thus speaks of the intertwinement of the overarching economic situation and the fragility of day-to-day interactions and serves as an example of how 'the wide-ranging dynamics of modernity translate into the basic substance of everyday social interaction on a smaller scale' (Bonhomme 2012: 211).

The turn towards privacy, security and individualization also lies at the heart of another practice well known in Kaleko. While strolling around with Edward shortly after the primary elections of 2013, he confessed that he had taken money from a politician although he had never intended to vote for him. In contrast to what one might expect after reading Shipton's study of *pesa makech*, Edward does not consider such acts as immoral as long as one uses the money according to one's best consciousness, which, in this case, he had done by using the money to send a friend's sick daughter to hospital – a way of disposing of the money that reproduces social relations and would have led to negative effects in the 1980s. William has a less easy-going perspective on money gained in such a way. Similar to 'handouts' distributed during political campaigns, he perceives them as undeserved, as being acquired without 'hard work' legitimating their appropriation, and referred to them as one reason for Western Kenya's non-developing economy. Instead of working on their fields, people would walk and drive from one political event to the next in order to get some 'extra cash' (*pesa nono*). The two contradictory evaluations of the practice of taking money from politicians without intending to vote for them – on the one hand Edward's embrace, on the other William's rejection – exemplify a problem that results from relativizing the sphere of *rieyo* for the sake of upholding its potential to order the surroundings in such a way that value can grow. If the sphere of *rieyo*'s applicability is no longer limited to what happens inside homesteads inhabited by an extended family, it becomes difficult if not impossible for people not perfectly acquainted with the intentions and actions of others to evaluate whether acts are signs of an individualism that is blatantly directed against Luo *chik* or if they are attempts to rescue Luo *chik* on a smaller scale. Relativizing the sphere of *rieyo*'s applicability by privatizing it thus results in an unintended increase of uncertainty, although it actually aims to reduce uncertainty.



FIGURE 3 The author in Dorothy's living room, with a poster of Philip Okoth Okundi only partly visible in the upper right-hand corner. Photograph taken by the author, 10 April 2015.

The difficulty of inferring someone's intention from the available information and the problem of having a multiplicity of potential perspectives, as epitomized in Grace's realization that one and the same action can cause mutually exclusive interpretations, not only lead to an increase in suspicions and allegations of illicitly gained wealth between Luo and to a dangerous impasse in regard to meaningful political action,¹⁶ they are also mirrored in the relativity of *pesa nono*'s moral classification. *Pesa nono* refers to money that is gained in ways considered 'disreputable'. In contrast to *pesa makech*, however, no overarching agreement exists as to what money should be classified as *pesa nono*. Almost all money can be put in this category, apart from money acquired by hard, manual labour (*tich matek*). While William classifies 'handouts' as *pesa nono*, other people might conclude that the money William acquires by selling maize other people plant for him is *pesa nono*. It is this reluctance to clarify what counts as *pesa nono* that inhibits *jo-Kaleko* from conceptualizing *pesa nono* as entailing socio-economic consequences comparable to the ones explored in the case of *pesa makech*. As much as socio-economic disorder and marginalization have made it difficult for *jo-*

¹⁶Since 2009, Kaleko's infrastructure has been improved noticeably: a floodlight enabling safe movement during the night was erected, electricity poles and cables extended further into the countryside, and roads constructed, improved or repaired. Many of these changes can be traced back to Joseph Ouma, Kaleko's newly elected member of parliament. As I travelled with Edward to attend the funeral of Ouma's youngest brother, however, I realized that both the electricity poles and the improvement of the road cover exactly the distance between Kaleko and Ouma's *dala*. It is the multiplicity of potential perspectives that allows *jo-Kaleko* to evaluate such an action both as 'egoistic' and as an attempt by Ouma to start 'straightening' his own home, from where he will continue to 'sort out' the homes of other *jo-Kaleko*, Kaleko or even Kenya as a whole.

Kaleko to localize the sphere in which *rieyo* is applicable, money's moral classification has become a contested issue, of which not only *pesa nono*'s ambiguity but also *pesa marach*'s diversity are a clear index.

Conclusion

The ambiguous ways in which *jo*-Kaleko classify *pesa nono* links back to Dorothy's decision to resiliently accept the disorder of her surroundings. Her acceptance of the impossibility of deciding upon the fundamental question of 'who deserves what' independent of context is mirrored in the peculiar way in which she had decorated her living room. She had put up, side by side, two posters of local politicians: Moses Kajwang' and Philip Okoth Okundi, who had both run in the Homa Bay senatorial by-election in February 2015 (see [Figure 3](#)).

Although Moses Kajwang' had won, Dorothy decided to leave both posters hanging. Who had really won the election was, from her perspective, not really ascertainable anyway. For Dorothy, enduring ambivalence, accepting disorder and 'struggling' in it are morally superior compared with the assumption that one is able to answer questions that are ultimately unanswerable in a 'messed-up world'. And it seems quite reasonable to assume that the problem of 'having no future' (*onge future*), with which this article started and with which *jo*-Kaleko primarily are confronted, is partly a consequence of the problem of being unable to work out what precisely is happening before and around them – even more so since the general election of 2013 has disenchanting them politically. In contrast to a glorified past dominated by a well-structured order, the present has become 'messed up'. *Jo*-Kaleko's surroundings change faster than they can cope with: relatives die, friends become unemployed, the rains refuse to come and elections are lost.

Dovetailing with their assessment of the present as ever-changing, many *jo*-Kaleko I met in the last seven years again and again switched seamlessly between the different strategies of dealing with disorder explored in this article. It seems that these strategies are experienced by them not as actually lived, rehearsed and practised opportunities but as detached and abstract options that are virtually ever present. *Jo*-Kaleko can always attempt to exploit them instrumentally without being certain that they will yield any benefits. As shown by his reappearance in all sections of the article, Edward is a paradigmatic example of such an instrumentalistic approach. Prudently switching between ways of approaching the problem of disorder, Edward has transformed a set of exclusionary ways of dealing with disorder into an exploitable repertoire of alternatives that helps him survive uncertainty. He seamlessly alternates between, for instance, incantations of the 'power' (*teko*) of 'Luo politics' and desperation triggered by the conviction that the future is bleak. After visiting an important family meeting or funeral, he might disappear to Nairobi for some 'business', only to resurface the following day debating with 'thugs' somewhere near Kaleko's market, asking me to stroll around a bit or trying to organize a meeting with Joseph Ouma, Kaleko's newly elected member of parliament, with whom he went to school.

Edward's instrumental exploitation of ambiguity can serve as proof that he experiences the diverse strategies to cope with disorder and exclusion in the same, somewhat abstract way in which I, both analytically and formally, have dealt with them in this article. In the disordered surroundings in which *jo-Kaleko* correctly locate themselves, one could say that they are neither able to autonomously create fixed rules that lead to the creation of value nor able any longer to 'uncritically' enact the traditionally solidified way of dealing with disorder (*rieyo dala*). In contrast, the uncertainty and unpredictability of their surroundings force *jo-Kaleko* to choose – again and again, and without always having good reasons – one out of several strategies to respond to socio-economic disorder. The slogan '*Onge future*', which I referred to in my ethnographic vignette, thus speaks of a socio-economic situation in which the 'operations in and through which people weave their existence in incoherence, uncertainty, instability and discontinuity' (Mbembe and Roitman 1995: 325) are themselves chosen by *jo-Kaleko* in an unstable and unforeseeable way. The consequence is that what had once been a bundled repertoire of lived and experientially proven opportunities linked to a cosmologically fixed moral framework (*chik*) becomes a set of strategies to be exploited instrumentally depending on ad hoc assessments of the possibilities offered by ever-changing surroundings.

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Abstract

This article explores relations between ways of experiencing socio-economic disorder, strategies on how to deal with it, and monetary classifications that symbolize these ways and strategies. It assumes that we can learn something from the fact that the concept of *pesa makech* ('bitter money') has been replaced with the much more diffuse notion of *pesa marach* ('bad money') in Western Kenya during the last twenty-five years. This shift in how 'negative forms' of money are discursively marked indexes a change in the way in which the people of Kaleko, a small market centre in Western Kenya, conceptualize the disorder of their surroundings. Instead of interpreting disorder as an effect of events taking place inside their sphere of influence, residents of Kaleko now predominantly situate the cause of disorder in actions of external actors that are perceived as uncontrollable: the 'economy', money itself, politicians, members of other ethnic groups and untrustworthy Luo. This necessarily changes the ways in which disorder is tackled: while *pesa makech*'s bitterness could be resolved by 'sorting out' (*rieyo*) the homestead's disorder, nowadays people employ other ways that aim at resolving disorder: upscaling *rieyo*'s potential to the Kenyan nation; 'struggling' (*chandre*) through disorder; and relativizing *rieyo*'s applicability.

Résumé

Cet article explore les liens entre les modes d'expérience du désordre socioéconomique, les stratégies pour y faire face, et les classifications monétaires qui symbolisent ces modes et stratégies. Il suppose que l'on peut apprendre quelque chose du fait que le concept de *pesa makech* (« argent amère ») a été remplacé par la notion bien plus diffuse de *pesa marach* (« mauvais argent ») dans l'Ouest du Kenya au cours des vingt-cinq dernières années. Ce changement dans la manière d'utiliser des « formes négatives » d'argent comme marqueurs discursifs indique un changement dans la manière dont les habitants de Kaleko, une petite ville de marché de l'Ouest du Kenya, conceptualisent le désordre de leur

environnement. Au lieu d'interpréter le désordre comme l'effet d'événements survenant au sein de leur sphère d'influence, les résidents de Kaleko situent aujourd'hui principalement la cause du désordre dans l'action de facteurs extérieurs perçus comme incontrôlables : l'« économie », l'argent lui-même, les politiciens, les membres d'autres groupes ethniques et les Luo, peu dignes de confiance. Ceci change nécessairement la façon de faire face au désordre : là où il était possible de résoudre l'amertume du *pesa makech* en « rangeant » (*rieyo*) le désordre du foyer, on emploie aujourd'hui autres moyens de résoudre le désordre : appliquer le potentiel du *rieyo* à l'échelle de la nation kenyane ; « se débattre » (*chandre*) à travers le désordre ; et relativiser l'applicabilité du *rieyo*.