CHAPTER 3

Cartography of a Diffused Presence

When I arrived at the Kabul office, I immediately printed out the map of Afghanistan produced by the Data Section (see Figure 3.5) in order to locate the UNHCR bases in this unfamiliar context. This same map was to be found at every workstation in the office. Pinned to the wall or kept close to hand, maps are omnipresent in UNHCR offices and are an indispensable work tool, the principal material UNHCR officers use to familiarise themselves with the organisation's presence and intervention sites across the world. The ubiquity of these maps also reveals the anxiety of employees of an organisation that is not rooted in any specific location: how to get to grips with vast territories where access is often difficult. While they provide information on the location of UNHCR offices, these maps also offer evidence of how the institution understands the space in which it intervenes, and the perspective from which it attempts to change it (Anderson 2006: 163). I will consider these documents as a basis for mapping the UNHCR's deployment during the 2000s.

The day after the UNHCR was founded, its staff team was small enough to gather around a piano to celebrate Christmas (Loescher et al. 2008: 79). In the years that followed, as its geographical area of intervention expanded, its infrastructure and staffing also grew and diversified. In 2006 the organisation had some 300 offices distributed through about 110 countries, and employed around 7,000 people.[1] Though a 'lightweight' by the standard of state administrations, the UNHCR operates over a much larger area, but has a more limited physical presence. The UNHCR's mandate is not defined by a relationship to a specific territorialised space; it is determined by a sector of the global population, its 'people of concern' (who numbered around 33 million in 2006), who live in different parts of the world, or are on the move. The UNHCR's infrastructure is continually reconfigured, as it launches new

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programmes and withdraws others. Offices also take very different forms, from the headquarters in Geneva, where a thousand employees work at desks and in meeting rooms, to the small Bamyan office in central Afghanistan, which also serves as the living quarters for the only expatriate on site.

James Ferguson and Akhil Gupta (2002) identify two principles underlying the spatiality of the state: verticality (the state is above society) and encompassment (the state encompasses its localities). They argue that these two dimensions correspond to the way in which the state sees itself and the way in which it perceives its relations with other authorities. Supported by bureaucratic practices, verticality and encompassment produce spatial and scalar hierarchies that help the state to legitimise and naturalise its authority. Drawing on this approach, in this chapter I analyse the UNHCR's spatial deployment on the basis of four cartographic representations produced by it. These maps reveal how the UNHCR's physical presence is shaped both by the paradigm of the 'refugee problem' and by interactions with a multiplicity of interlocutors. Analysing how the UNHCR situates itself in relation to other actors then makes it possible to situate the organisation and its worldview in the global political space.

To begin with, I discuss the tension underlying the relationship between the UNHCR and states. The UNHCR's deployment is based on the spatiality of the interstate system and subject to the approval of state authorities. But while it relies on the legitimacy conferred upon it by states, the organisation materialises a suprastate political space based both on verticality and on the encompassment of states – a space that putatively encompasses the entire planet. I then consider the nonstate actors with whom the organisation has to interact in order to reach its recipient populations within Afghan territory, such as the village councils and the Taliban. Even though the UNHCR does not consider them political actors in their own right, it must establish legitimacy with them, despite the fact that they do not recognise its claim to encompass the world. Taking into account both the geographical dispersal of the UNHCR's network of offices and the organisation's need to reach many heterogeneous interlocutors, I identify a third principle of *diffusion* that, together with verticality and encompassment, underlies the spatialisation of the UNHCR.

A State-Centred Operation

On the map the UNHCR produces to show its presence in the world (see Figure 3.1), the land masses, represented physically, are divided by state borders. The map also gives the names of all the states officially recognised by the UN, from the vast extent of the United States to the small islands of the Pacific.

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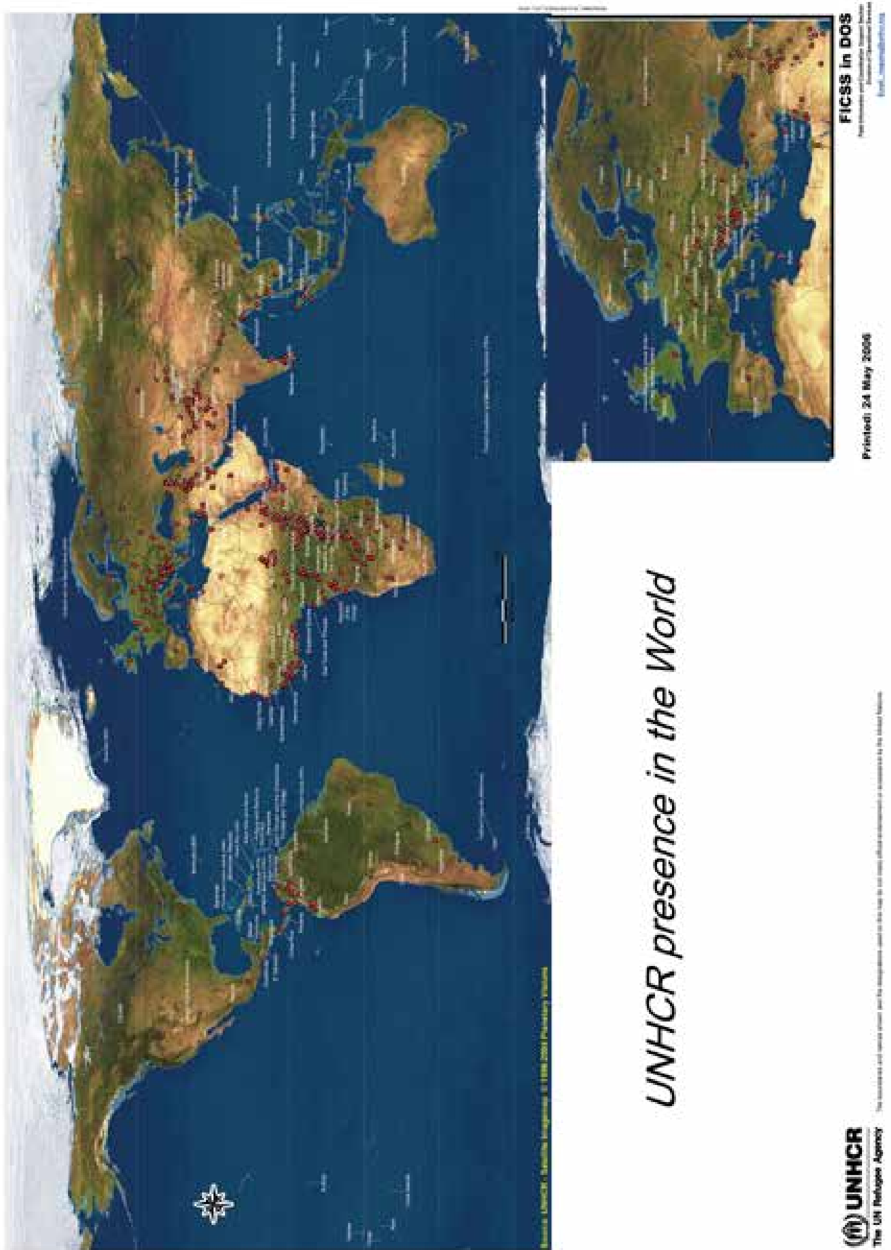

Figure 3.1. Map produced by the UNHCR, showing the organisation's presence in the world in 2006. © UNHCR

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Mary Douglas (1986) showed that naturalisation works by establishing an analogy with the natural world (or another domain that is not considered to be socially determined). Here the naturalisation of the interstate system is clearly apparent, since the division of the world into territorialised state jurisdictions is assimilated into a physical representation of the planet. This map shows the extent to which the system of states rooted in nature marks the confines of the UNHCR's view of the world.

James Scott (1998) has highlighted the logic of standardisation and homogenisation of space that characterises the way in which the developmentalist and socialist state views and intervenes in reality. The UNHCR adopts a similar mechanism of homogenisation and standardisation of the global space, using the state as the central criterion of legibility. The state forms the geographical unit and scale of reference, making it possible to grasp the world and compare its parts. In this way, the UNHCR can maintain a synoptic overview that embraces all the territories and populations of the planet. This appears clearly in the division of labour and internal operation. Programmes at the scale of a country, headed by a Representative, known as the Head of Mission, form the 'unit of measurement' of the UNHCR's activity, and programmes to be conducted and aims to be achieved are developed on the basis of a Country Operation. The Country Operation Plan is the main standardised tool through which programmes are developed and annual funding is distributed. With the 'refugee problem' as the basic paradigm, states are classified as 'country of origin' or 'country of asylum' ('host country'), depending on the nationality of the populations concerned.

The state is also the pivot around which the UNHCR's presence in the world is structured. In the interstate sphere from which it arose, every section of the planet is governed by a state jurisdiction. State authorities are the UNHCR's priority interlocutors. As the creators, funders and members of the organisation, states constitute its primary source of legitimacy and resources, and create the policies the UNHCR is tasked with overseeing. It should also be noted that the distribution of UNHCR offices strictly follows the hierarchy of state administrations. Where they are present, these offices sit alongside those of the national administration. In each country where the organisation has an office, it must be present in the capital; this is sometimes the only office it has. The regions of competence of each office are determined by states' administrative boundaries, even down to the district level. The hierarchy of the organisational structure thus reasserts the verticality and encompassment of the state highlighted by Gupta and Ferguson.

In Iran, Afghanistan and Pakistan (see Figure 3.2), the central offices where the senior officers are based and programmes are coordinated are located in the capital, and have the highest status. The UNHCR's Operation is then structured as a pyramid, through the Branch Office, followed by bases

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established in the remainder of the country. The main cities are often the location of Sub-Offices, while the smaller Field Offices are located on the border or outside of the main cities. Thus, the Herat and Mashhad offices, located on either side of the Afghan-Iranian border, are geographically very close, but belong to two different Country Operations, within which they each occupy a peripheral position. With the rise in expulsions from Iran in the summer of 2007, these zones became the nerve centre for information gathering and the emergency intervention. Several attempts were made to improve direct communication between the two offices, but these met with little success.

Figure 3.1 shows that while the UNHCR operates throughout the world, its presence varies widely in different continents and countries. Its vast geographical range stems from the gradual expansion that led it to intervene outside Europe as new crises arose. To begin with, interventions were concentrated in 'host countries'. Later, with the expansion of repatriation programmes during the 1990s, interventions extended to 'countries of origin'. When a crisis is over, the UNHCR often maintains a presence, at least in the capital, as a base for monitoring asylum policies. Looking at the varied distribution of offices, a much higher density is immediately apparent around what were the epicentres of crisis in 2006, where UNHCR programmes were concentrated: Colombia, Liberia and Sierra Leone, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, the Great Lakes region, Sudan, Iraq, Afghanistan, Sri Lanka and the Balkans. But on closer inspection (see Figure 3.2), it becomes clear that the number of offices does not always correspond to the size of the recipient populations concerned. Iran and Pakistan, which at the time when the map was made were among the countries hosting the world's largest refugee populations, had only four and three offices respectively!

The size and distribution of the UNHCR's presence in a country, like its freedom for action and the kinds of programme it manages, primarily reflect the compatibility between its objectives and the interests of the state authorities responsible for authorising the presence of a body that is mandated, among other things, to monitor their asylum polices. By virtue of its interstate nature, the organisation is inclined to recognise territorialised state jurisdictions as the effective authorities. In order to set up an office and undertake any activity, the UNHCR must therefore obtain the authorisation of the state in question, which is then, significantly, described as a 'host country'.[2] The relationship between the UNHCR and each 'host country' is governed by an agreement. The model proposed by the UNHCR, which forms the basis for negotiation, stipulates among other things that the government of the 'host country' must allow the UNHCR access to the population, must not impose charges on it, must guarantee the safety of its employees and must facilitate their residence. State authorities are also required to approve the organisation's representatives.[3] If the government of a country does not appreciate the UNHCR's activity, it may

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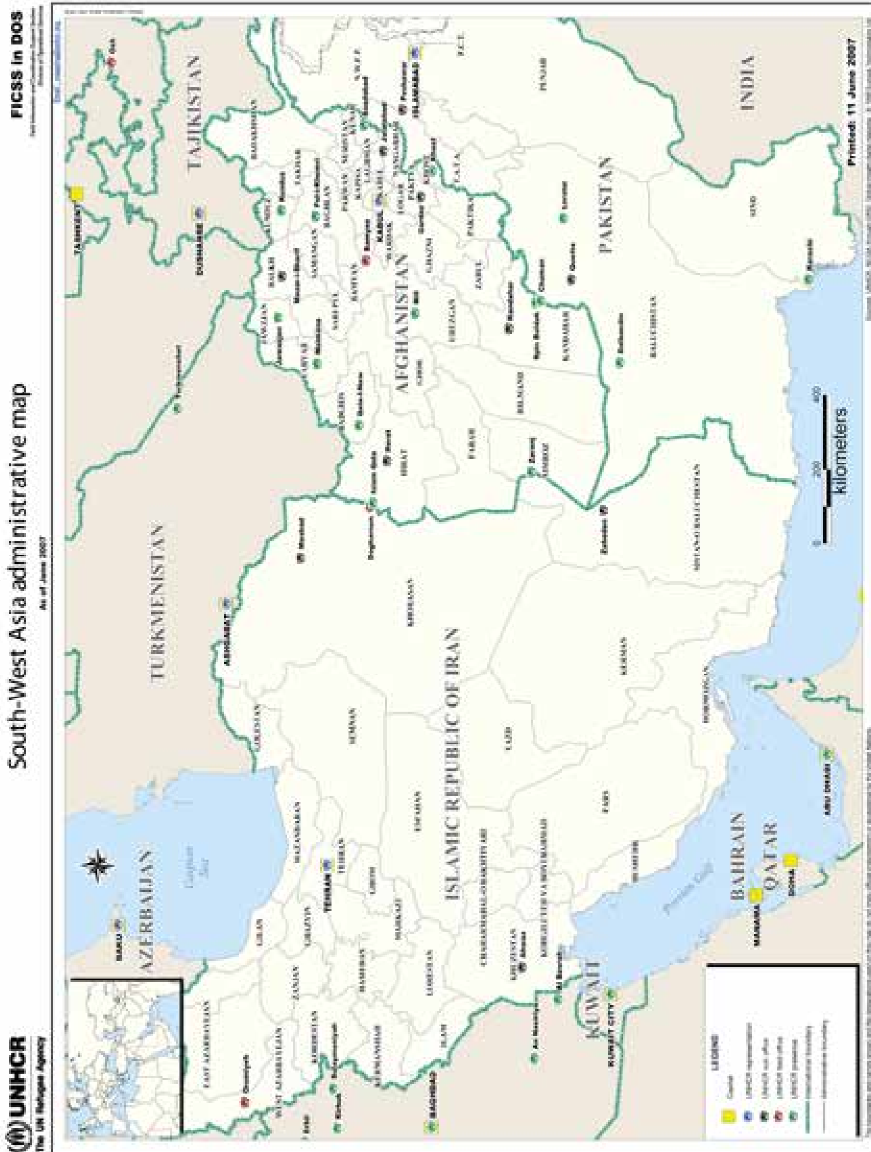

Figure 3.2. Map produced by the UNHCR, showing Iran, Afghanistan and Pakistan, and the organisation's presence in these countries in 2007. © UNHCR

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create obstacles to its work. Typically, when the organisation sets up a base swiftly in emergency situations, its presence is welcomed for its material and logistical support. But states may suddenly withdraw their authorisation as soon as the agency's activity becomes too troublesome for them.[4] Thus, a separate negotiation is required for each state. In some cases state jurisdictions are porous, and it is easy for the UNHCR to set up there; in others, the state raises an impenetrable shield.

The UNHCR's presence in Central Asia dates back to the start of the conflict in 1979, following the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan. The evolution of the organisation's programmes in the region shows that while donor funding is essential for financing its infrastructure and programmes, the position of the central authorities in the states concerned is the determining factor shaping its presence and programmes in their countries.

In 2006 the UNHCR's presence in Iran was limited to four offices: Tehran (the capital), Mashhad, Zahedan and Ahwaz. Owing to tensions with the West, the Iranian authorities had restricted the presence of international organisations since the Islamic Revolution, mainly by limiting the number of visas granted. Despite the resources that the UNHCR could have offered, Iranian governments had never been in favour of its establishment in the country. They preferred to manage programmes for Afghans independently through the Bureau for Aliens and Foreign Immigrants Affairs (BAFIA), the body within the Ministry of the Interior that dealt with policy relating to foreigners. Iran did not ask the UNHCR for help in 1979, only doing so at the end of 1980 when the war with Iraq had begun to weigh on state finances. A first agreement for the establishment of a UNHCR office in Tehran was concluded in 1984. The Mashhad and Zahedan offices were not set up until 1992 when the repatriation programme was launched. The Zahedan office was subsequently closed and transferred to Kerman in 2008, following the Iranian government's decision to forbid foreigners access to the province of Sistan-Baluchistan. Thus, the UNHCR's effective access to the territory and to Afghans is very limited: contact with the Afghan population is possible only at the UNHCR offices or in repatriation centres. Any other access must be negotiated on a case-by-case basis and requires the prior agreement of the BAFIA.

The UNHCR presence in Pakistan was more quickly established: in 1979 the Pakistani authorities asked the UNHCR for help in dealing with the influx of Afghans, who had gathered in camps in the border areas. The Islamabad office was opened that year, and those in Peshawar and Quetta the following year. In this case, both donor countries and the host country were favourable to a UNHCR intervention. The United States, which had just adopted a more proactive strategy of containing its Soviet adversary, was fomenting the resistance of the Mujahideen movements based in the camps in order to destabilise the communist regime. The Pakistani government aligned with the United

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States so as to break out of its international isolation and increase its influence in Afghanistan, as part of its anti-India strategy. The presence of camps to be managed also allowed the central government to establish a presence in the tribal regions of the North-West Frontier Province, which had retained semi-autonomous status since the colonial era. In this way, it was able to allay the fears of an independent Pashtunistan.[5] Nevertheless, the Pakistani authorities also took care to limit the UNHCR's freedom of action and its access to territory and population. The first agreement authorised the agency to intervene in Pakistani territory on condition that it worked alongside the national authorities. Administration of the camps and of UN aid was entrusted to the Commission for Afghan Refugees (CAR), which was set up in 1979 for this purpose. The UNHCR therefore did not set up field offices in or near the camps. Subsequently, the drastic reduction in funding once the strategic objective had been achieved led to the suspension of a number of programmes during the 1990s. Missions in the camps and the activity of the three UNHCR offices were cut back. In late 2001 they increased again thanks to the repatriation programme, which was wholeheartedly welcomed by the Pakistani government and required major logistical support from the UNHCR.

The situation in Iran and Pakistan contrasts with that in other 'countries of asylum' that saw large inflows of people fleeing conflict, such as Kenya and Tanzania. In these countries, which have received more attention from researchers (Agier 2008, 2011; Hyndman 2000; Turner 2005), the state authorities took a different approach: they did not raise obstacles to the UNHCR's work provided that the organisation offered material support in isolated, specifically demarcated zones. The state authorities willingly left management of aid to the UNHCR, especially if their country was poor, as was often the case. The result was 'humanitarian enclaves': the UNHCR effectively had free rein to establish its bases there, and in these contexts has been described as a 'state surrogate' (Slaughter and Crisp 2008). However, this often went hand in hand with the confinement of migrants in camps, with international organisations installed in the zone around the camps.

As the maps show, in 2006 the Afghan state was particularly permeable, with many offices scattered over its territory. This had been the situation since late 2001. The UNHCR had then been present in the territory for nearly twenty years, but with much reduced staffing owing to the conflict.[6] A first repatriation programme had been launched following the Soviet withdrawal in 1989. Subsequently, the Branch Office was transferred to Islamabad during the 1990s, owing to safety concerns and the restrictions imposed by the Taliban (Centlivres and Centlivres-Demont 1999: 962). At the end of 2001, with the fall of the Taliban and the launch of the reconstruction project, the UNHCR's presence in Afghanistan was reconfigured within the space of a few months. The Branch Office in Kabul was reopened in new, more spacious premises. In

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total, twenty-two offices have been opened since 2002 to manage returns and the implementation of projects at the local level. By the end of 2002, there were 880 UNHCR employees in the country (including almost one hundred expatriates). In the new geopolitical context, programmes ran unhindered. The Afghan state, which was highly dependent on international funding, raised no resistance to the presence of international organisations in its territory. Moreover, since Afghanistan was the country of origin of the returnees, the UNHCR was intervening in order to help the state take charge of them rather than to claim a status for non-nationals as it did in Iran and Pakistan. Thus, the UNHCR was able to operate as it wished: offices were located in the regions that received the highest number of returnees and where the UNHCR programmes were concentrated.

In Europe, North America, Australia and Japan, the UNHCR's presence is more localised, often limited to a single office in the capital. There are exceptions: the dual office in Brussels, which maintains relations with both the Belgian authorities and the European Commission, and the offices in Italy and Greece that deal with the massive influxes of asylum seekers arriving by sea. Although, as landing points for asylum seekers, these are 'countries of asylum', their main relationship with the UNHCR is as 'donor countries', major funders that enable the organisation to finance its infrastructure and its programmes.

For the last few decades, the UNHCR's only activities in most European countries have consisted of monitoring asylum policies, advocacy and fundraising.[7] The organisation's scope for intervention is relatively small in Europe. While criticism from the UNHCR could damage European countries' status as champions of human rights and democracy, in these contexts it does not have the leverage of its aid programmes, since they are deemed sufficiently wealthy and capable of managing the protection of refugees in their territories themselves. During my posting in Rome in 2005, for example, the Italian maritime police's actions in pushing migrants back to sea elicited the disapproval of the UNHCR office. But while the organisation was unsparing in its criticism, it had nevertheless to tread carefully. Strong public condemnation would have been very embarrassing for the Italian government, which was one of the organisation's principal funders. It was therefore important to maintain positive relations and a basic level of agreement.

Supranational Verticality, Global Encompassment

The UNHCR is enmeshed in the system of states in a complex interlocking, an inextricable entanglement of affirmation and bypassing. As discussed earlier, its interventions are structured on the basis of the interstate order, which is underpinned by the principle of state sovereignty. In accordance with this

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principle, state authorities always have the power to shape the organisation's presence in their country, for example by hindering officers' travel. From this point of view, the UNHCR's interventions reassert states' supreme authority, and their claims to verticality and encompassment. At the same time, the offices the organisation sets up and the activities it is authorised to undertake circumvent and undermine the absolute authority states are supposed to exercise. Once the UNHCR has established itself in a territory, it pierces state jurisdiction and subverts their spatiality as 'sealed envelopes', setting up another scale of government at the UN and supranational levels. Although supported by states, this scale of government rises 'above' them and encompasses them.

The fact that the UNHCR was created and mandated by states might indicate that it should be seen as subordinate to them. So how is it that representations of verticality and encompassment prevail within the organisation? The UNHCR's claim to occupy a higher moral dimension and embody a political community that encompasses those of states is supported by a number of factors. First, as a UN agency, the UNHCR is deemed to be *super partes* ('above parties') in relation to states – in other words, to be in a relation of neutrality, impartiality and therefore equidistant to them. Second, the UNHCR is the custodian of UN values such as peace, interstate cooperation, equality between states and between persons, and human rights. These principles are considered supreme to the extent that they are the subject of broad consensus among states. UN agencies are tasked with ensuring that these principles are applied throughout the world, a role that no state on its own could assume. Thus, where protection of refugees is concerned, the UNHCR articulates standards (models that are therefore by definition 'superior' to actual situations) and oversees states' asylum policies to ensure conformity with these norms. As the term (*over*see) suggests, this can only be done from above. In order to fulfil its mission, the UNHCR must therefore hold states, their policies, their territories and the refugee populations located there in one all-encompassing gaze.

The UNHCR's claim to global encompassment derives from the UN, the body that represents the entire interstate system. While only about two-thirds of the world's states are members of the UNHCR, almost all are members of the UN. Through its existence and activity, the UN brings into being a political space rooted in the interstate system, where there is nothing outside the set of states of the world. The planet, conceived as the ensemble of all territorial states, is seen as a single, unified space. Thus, the UNHCR's sphere of activity extends over the whole world. Any crisis therefore involves the organisation, wherever it occurs and whatever the populations and territories concerned. The reference space is no longer seen as an inside and an outside in relation to a territory of competence (in the manner of state jurisdictions), but as one single interior that extends across the entire world. It is this global range that

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forms the basis for the UN and its agencies' claim to universalism, which is apparent for example in the normative tone of their documents.

At the material level, the number, frequency and scale of material and immaterial flows (personnel, documents and humanitarian aid) necessary to the organisation's operation and to its very existence help to support representations of verticality and encompassment. These flows constantly cross or circumvent state borders.

This positioning as encompassing, impartial and morally superior is clearly evident in the UN's emblem. It shows an azimuthal equidistant projection of the planet centred on the North Pole, on which all land masses are visible. Around this is an olive wreath, the symbol of peace. State borders are not shown. It is neither a country nor a capital that has been chosen as the centre of the map, as is often the case in state representations, but a physical location that is deemed neutral. This image evokes a single shared global habitat. The fact that all of the world's land masses appear emphasises the UN's global remit (an aspiration when the logo was created, and a real one today). The principle of equality of states in relation to the UN is also evident in the alphabetical order in which they are always listed by the UN. Their flags are always ordered in the same way, whether at the entrance to the UN headquarters in New York or at the Palace of Nations in Geneva. As well as asserting the organisation's source of legitimacy, this flattening of relations between states evokes the sovereign equality between them and thus symbolises the *super partes* position claimed by the UN.

It is clear, then, why and in what sense UNHCR and UN officers, and many observers, see these organisations as 'global'. The term emphasises the vast scale of their field of intervention, but the concept remains analytically and descriptively weak, for this representation conveys their claims to encompassment and universality.

The UN's claims to verticality, encompassment and universalism are both supported and rejected by states. Its political positioning is constructed and reconstructed in the perennial process of negotiations between UN officials and state representatives. This tension is also reflected in two distinct kinds of institutional space: multilateral forums and UN bureaucracies.

Multilateral forums are held at the UN's two centres in New York and Geneva. The UN headquarters and the Palace of Nations house large conference and meeting halls (primary among them the General Assembly Hall and the Security Council Chamber). States are present here as singular entities represented by their delegations, as members, funders and agents of the UN and its agencies. However, states are not directly present in the UNHCR infrastructure. Its administration is therefore a decision-making body in its own right and is relatively autonomous. This could be seen as a more advanced 'stage' in the UN's development: it is no longer simply the sum of states, but a

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body generated by their coming together that has freed itself from the umbilical cord linking it to its creators, embodying multilateralism in a single new institution.

Of course, the UNHCR remains institutionally linked to states: they make up its Executive Committee, which meets once a year in one of the Palace of Nations conference halls, and the UN General Assembly appoints the High Commissioner and receives its annual report. The UNHCR is also firmly 'plugged in' to the UN's centres of multilateralism in New York and Geneva, where staff regularly travel and where the UNHCR convenes and leads multilateral conferences. But the UNHCR offices have no venue for interstate conferences. Its infrastructure consists primarily of workspaces for UN officers and meeting rooms. Similarly, it is not the flags of the world's countries (symbolising a gathering of all states) that are displayed at the UNHCR, but a single logo, where the olive wreath makes reference to the UN flag and thus indicates its affiliation.

An Archipelago of Offices

The UNHCR is dotted over the globe in small spaces within state jurisdictions, creating an archipelago of offices. These spaces, often contained within a single building or even an apartment, act as bases from which the UNHCR engages in the global political space. Unlike embassies, UNHCR offices are not organised around a 'continental territory' to which they are legally and morally attached, but rather around an island of reference. The UNHCR Headquarters is the most permanent and largest office. In 2006 it accommodated around one thousand employees (some 15% of the total global staff and 34% of the expatriate staff) and accounted for a substantial proportion of the annual budget. It houses the material symbols of the institution, such as the memorial for staff who have died in service, the archives and a public media centre. Guided tours of the UNHCR building can even be arranged.[8]

Like embassies, when these territorialised spaces exist within a state jurisdiction, they acquire a particular status. UN norms stipulate that the state must recognise the inviolability of offices and the immunity of the agency's property. In this sense, they constitute territorial islands within which the UNHCR has complete freedom of action. The offices taken together can thus be likened to an archipelago of enclaves encapsulated within state jurisdictions, connected to one another by flows that are made possible by transport and telecommunications technologies.

Of the offices where I spent time or visited in Switzerland, Italy and Afghanistan (see Figure 3.3), only the Geneva Headquarters was purpose-built to house the UNHCR offices. In other locations the organisation

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adapts its set-up to the context, using available spaces which it organises according to its needs. Whether they are located on two floors of a residential building in Rome's Parioli district, in formerly prestigious mansions in central Kabul or in a small block in a mud-brick compound on the edge of the village of Bamyan, these spaces are taken over by the institution and thereby both separated from their surrounding environment and linked to one another. On entering them, UNHCR staff feel on familiar ground, 'at home', wherever in the world they are. Hard as it may be to ensure that UN principles are applied by states, these principles can shape practices and relations within the UNHCR's offices. The UNHCR's offices can be seen as its jurisdiction, a space where the organisation is free to shape the relationships within it. At the same time as asserting the UN's verticality and encompassment, the practices observed in these spaces and the principles underlying them help to create an autonomous translocal space.

When entering UNHCR offices, a number of features contribute to the impression of crossing a threshold and entering a UN space not subject to state authority. In order to enter UNHCR premises, it is necessary to pass through checkpoints. These resemble those of states: supervised barriers that can only be crossed with an entry pass. In Geneva and Rome, as in Kabul, offices are monitored by security guards and CCTV. Public access is restricted; entry is by appointment only. In Geneva, all staff have an electronic pass that allows them to go through the automatic security gates and the metal detector. Having gone in and out hundreds of times during my placement, I realised how difficult it is for people who do not work there to get into the central foyer at headquarters when I recently went to visit former colleagues. Visitors must wait at the entrance, with armed guards who watch over them until a staff member comes to fetch them. The restricted access reinforces the verticality of these spaces: global encompassment is not synonymous with free access for any inhabitant of the world.[9]

The UNHCR's blue and white logo (see Figure 3.4), often accompanied by the name of the organisation, is emblazoned in all of these spaces like a flag. It shows two hands joined to form a roof over a person. It reiterates the paradigm of the 'refugee problem': destitute people 'in need of protection'. This symbol gives UNHCR offices a common identity over and above the form they take in each context and their geographical separation from one another. In Geneva the logo and name of the organisation are inscribed in transparent letters on the glass frontage of the building. In Rome the UNHCR flag hangs at the third floor of the building, and the logo appears on the small plate by the doorbells, next to the name of the organisation in Italian (Alto Commissariato delle Nazioni Uniti per I Rifugiati (ACNUR)). In Kabul the logo is displayed in blue on the white entrance gate, next to the organisation's acronym in English and its translation in Dari (*daftar-e-muhajirina*).

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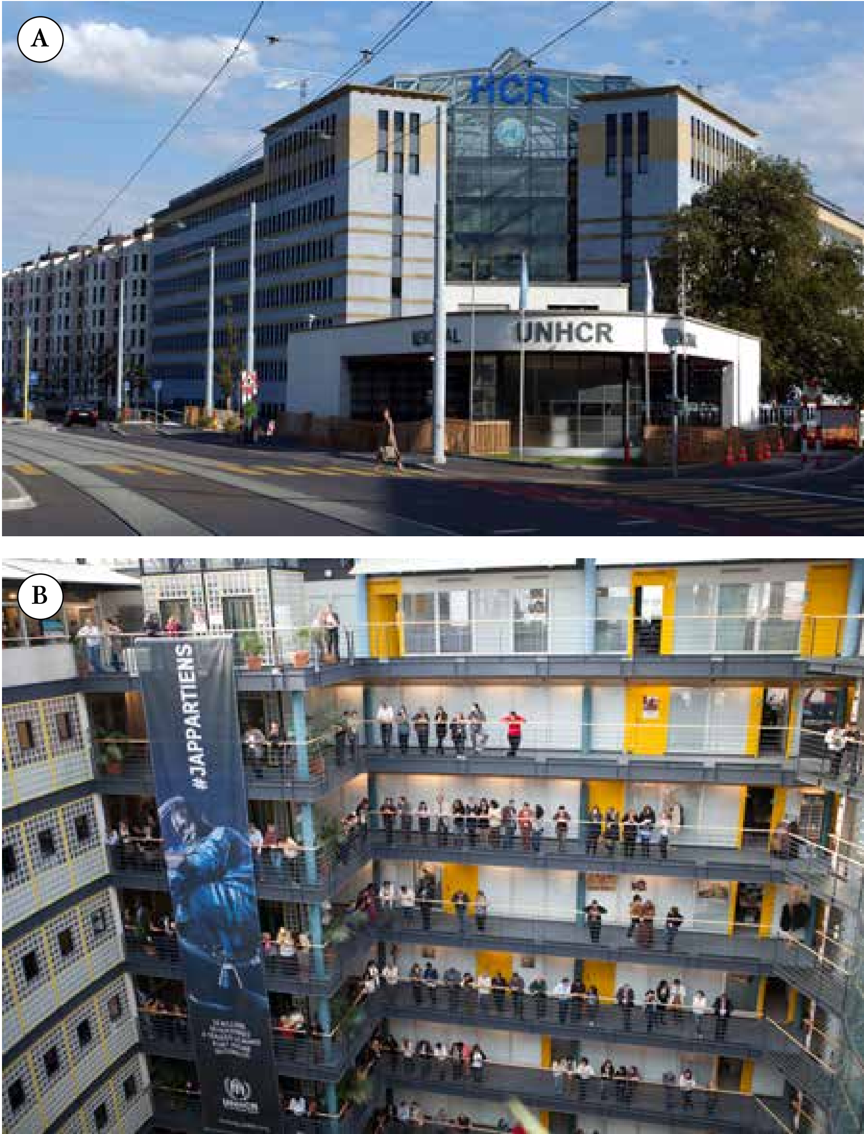

Figure 3.3. Images of the UNHCR offices I visited. A) UNHCR headquarters in Geneva. http://media.unhcr.org. © UNHCR/Susan Hopper. B) Main foyer of the Geneva headquarters. http://media.unhcr.org/. © UNHCR/Susan Hopper. C) UNHCR Executive Office in Kabul, July 2007. Photo by the author. D) Main foyer of the Kabul Executive Office, July 2007. Photo by the author. E) UNHCR office in Bamyan, Afghanistan, October 2007. Photo by the author. F) UNHCR vehicles during a 'field mission' in Istalif district, September 2007. Photo by the author

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Figure 3.4. UNHCR logo. © UNHCR, https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-sa/4.0/deed.en.

As Marion Fresia notes (2010), the figure of the refugee is a symbol of the institution's identity. This is further indicated by the frequent jokes that link the 'displacement' of refugees to that of UNHCR officers, who relocate regularly and are often out on mission.

UNHCR employees are familiar with these spaces also because these are all organised according to the same bureaucratic logic underlying the division of labour in the organisation. The division between the Protection and Operations departments and the senior management structures the distribution of workspaces at Headquarters, and is reflected in local offices, depending on the predominant activity there. In Rome, a staircase linked the lower floor, which housed the Communication and Fundraising department, to the upper floor where the legal Protection department, the administrative offices and the office of the Chief of Mission were located. In Kabul the Protection, Programme, Reintegration, Administration, Security, Logistics, and Data and Telecommunications units were overlooked by the most prestigious building, a lofty former palace that housed the Executive Office where the senior officers worked, surrounded by the Communication and External Relations departments. UNHCR offices are designed to be as self-sufficient as possible, both in terms of resource management (for example, they install independent electricity supply) and in the organisation of work. Most staff activities take place inside the offices, through exchanges between colleagues who are usually sitting in front of their computer.

The specific temporality common to UNHCR offices links them with one another and to other UN offices throughout the world. This temporality supports encompassment and verticality, and is manifested partly in a time difference in relation to the rhythms and institutions of surrounding contexts. For example, UNHCR holidays follow the UN calendar, which is guided by the principle of religious equality. The UN celebrates most major religious festivals of the main world religions. During my placement in Rome, without in any way expecting to, I celebrated the Muslim festival of Eid-al-Fitr, marking the end of Ramadan, while the city continued with a regular working day. Conversely, 1 May is always a working day at the UN, while for the rest of Geneva it is a public holiday. The UNHCR offices are also linked to one another by a common calendar whose tempo is set by the accounting year and marked by the bureaucratic procedures specific to the organisation. Furthermore, they share a temporality oriented towards the present and the near future, centred on the crises with which the organisation is currently dealing. I began my placement

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in Rome during the Christmas holidays in 2004: the tsunami had just hit Indonesia and Sri Lanka, and the Communications department was urgently seeking an intern. While outside a holiday atmosphere reigned, I stayed late at the office translating the updates coming from Geneva and posting them on the website, in an atmosphere of urgency and sadness about the tragedy. These time differences establish a distinction. They materialise the sense of belonging to a morally superior world that remains apart from the customs of the local country, celebrating equitably the main holidays of other countries of the world, and supporting humans in distress in distant crises.

UNHCR staff experienced this separation from the local context as rising above it, precisely because they felt free of national particularisms. For example, in the Kabul Branch Office, none of the female international employees covered their heads. Thus, the office constituted a sort of space apart where UN principles reigned. We were not entirely in Afghan territory, guests in a country whose cultural codes had to be respected. Here everyone was free to express their cultural belonging and all cultures were respected. Similarly, principles of gender equality and equality between nationalities underlay many practices and bureaucratic procedures. Prevention of sexual harassment featured prominently in the code of conduct and was the subject of specific training sessions; recruitment procedures incorporated national quotas.

What links these spaces concretely, in addition to the continual relocation of staff (see Chapter 4), is information technology. Whether they are connecting from a regular workspace at Headquarters or via a noisy generator in Kunduz, every UNHCR employee can, with a password, access the same virtual space, where time discrepancies are due only to differences in the time zone. The UNHCR's internal mail is a powerful means of communication that transmits messages and documents in real time. There is a permanent, high-volume flow of email. Whether one opens one's computer after a meeting or a period of leave, there is always a mass of email, a sign of the organisation's incessant, multisite activity. When I opened my inbox in Kabul in the morning, I would find messages from those who had been online late in the evening in Geneva or Brussels, or a message from Tokyo that had arrived during the night. The internal mail system creates a whole arena where decisions are taken and battles are played out. People throw themselves into the fray, expose themselves to others, get themselves noticed or commit terrible blunders. Certain codes need to be learned: how should you address the person you are writing to? Who should be included in list of addressees? Should they be included in the 'To' list or copied in? With time, you come to learn certain tricks, such as checking who has opened the message or recalling a message already sent. Although it is physically based in offices,[10] this space is effectively a virtual one. But staff are so consistently projected into it that it becomes very concrete.

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The 'Field'

The UNHCR has no territory; it has a 'field'. While it must inevitably deal with states, it also needs to come into contact with its other source of legitimacy, the populations it is mandated to protect. While the political maps of the world in geography textbooks, with their flat, uniform areas of colour, represent impermeable jurisdictions, on UNHCR maps, state borders are usually marked on physical maps (see Figures 3.1 and 3.5). States thus appear permeable and possible to travel through. UNHCR offices serve as a base for travel within jurisdictions in order to reach places where the organisation's recipients find themselves and programmes are implemented. The UNHCR does not, then, have a territory it controls, but rather an open, unfamiliar 'field' across which it has permission to travel.

Whether the subject of fantasies, fear or proud claims on the part of UNHCR staff, the 'field' is key to the organisation's identity and is highly valued within it. The 'field' is conflated with proximity with recipients. The privileged place it occupied during the 2000s thus gave an idea of the expansion of the organisation's operational activity alongside its legal work. Representing itself as refugee-centred is a crucial mark of identity for the UNHCR, enabling it to set itself up as the only UN agency that intervenes directly with the recipients of its activity and at the heart of conflicts. Other UN agencies tend more to operate from the UN's coordinating centres and in state capitals. It is worth pointing out, for example, that in 2007 the UNHCR was the only body with thirteen bases in Afghanistan. The UNDP had many more employees there, but they were concentrated in the large UN complex in central Kabul. Glamorised in the relationship between staff and organisation, which always highlights delivery of aid and staff sacrifices in the field, for expatriate staff the 'field' represents a major rite of passage in establishing themselves in the long term in the organisation (cf. also Fresia 2010).

The 'field' is represented as a distant elsewhere, often difficult to reach, a place where staff stay temporarily, for the time it takes to complete their assigned task, whether that be a two-year posting to a field office or a half-day mission. It is defined in relation to a familiar space that serves as a 'base' and to which staff return. Depending on the context, this 'base' may be the office, headquarters, administrative centres or Western countries.

At the global level, some countries are more likely to serve as 'field' than others. This reflects the division between the legal side of the organisation's work, which is oriented towards state authorities, and the operational side, which is focused on recipient populations. The 'field' is where physical interventions take place. It is thus rare for European countries to be represented as the 'field'. In the UNHCR office in Rome, the 'field' essentially designated missions in Africa, Asia and Latin America. At a pinch, the term might be

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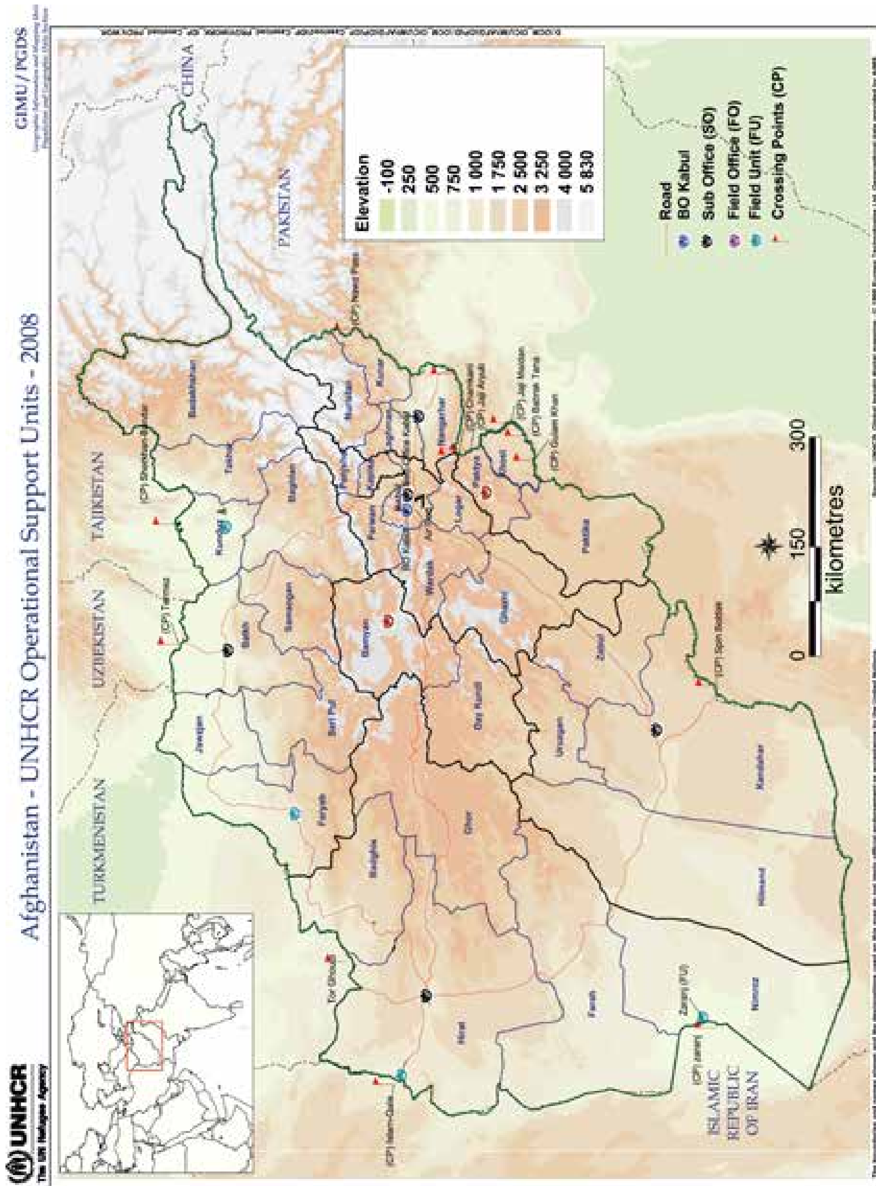

Figure 3.5. Map produced by the UNHCR, showing Afghanistan and the organisation's presence in the country in 2008. © UNHCR

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used to refer to occasional missions to Italian locations where migrants were coming to shore, but most of the time, travel in Italian territory was for press conferences and meetings with local government bodies. As a context for intervention, Italy was seen through the lens of a legal system that needed improvement rather than a territory to be travelled through.

At the national level, the 'field' is contrasted with the offices and administrative centres in cities. Here again, the state's logic of verticality is apparent. The further one is from the urban centres where the central state authorities are based, the 'deeper' the field. One 'enters' the field on leaving metalled roads. The 'depth' of the field is thus measured in the number of hours and conditions of travel from administrative centres. Sites around the capital are the most frequently visited, both by internal staff and by outside visitors (donors and journalists). By contrast, very few UNHCR employees have gone to Kunduz, which is reached from Kabul by a long car journey through the Hindu Kush, or to Zaranj in the middle of the desert, which is only accessible by plane. And from Kabul, a visit to the transit centre for returnees just outside the city was not a 'field mission' in the same sense as a visit to the outlying districts of the capital for the purpose of finding out about the conditions in which returnees were living. The transit centre, located on the Kabul-Jalalabad road, was an easily accessible place with familiar bureaucratic structures: it was managed by the UNHCR in collaboration with the Ministry of Refugees, and here it was returnees who must conform in order to obtain repatriation aid. On a mission to the suburbs, on the other hand, as your vehicle inched its way through the alleys, you entered an unknown world where you had no point of reference.

Many studies of bureaucracy focus on the interface between users and institution, often materialised by the reception desk (Herzfeld 1992; Spire 2007). But the UNHCR is far from a 'street-level bureaucracy' (Lipsky 1980), that is, a bureaucracy in direct contact with the recipients of its policies.

The Headquarters, as well as many of the Branch Offices, are designed to interact with actors in the interstate arena, not with the UNHCR's people 'of concern'. These offices are therefore configured as towers with no opening onto the street, being accessible only from higher up. A telling example is the case of the asylum seeker who stayed outside the UNHCR building for a week during my placement in Geneva in 2006. He was not able to enter the building. There was no space provided for such an occurrence, nor was there any officer competent to deal with it. The security guards brought him food every so often, and from the inside someone took responsibility for referring him to the appropriate structures for dealing with his 'individual case', while every day hundreds of officers passed by him as they entered or left the building. In Rome the Protection department would only see asylum seekers or refugees in exceptional circumstances. And when in the spring of 2005 a few

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dozen Somalians arrived at the entrance to the building, the UNHCR staff were nonplussed. It was the Representative who eventually went down to the street to talk to them.

Sub-Offices are designed to enable the UNHCR to coordinate and supervise rather than directly executing aid programmes. The implementation of programmes is entrusted to 'implementing partners' who are funded by the organisation and thus become key intermediaries in its work with displaced populations. They are usually NGOs, of varying size, from major transnational bodies that specialise in emergencies and refugee aid, such as the International Rescue Committee and the Norwegian Refugee Council, to small local NGOs. They could be seen as the 'limbs' of the UNHCR. In 2007, in order to implement its programmes in Afghanistan, the UNHCR drew on the support of thirty-three international and Afghan NGOs that specialised variously in sanitation, construction, human rights, etc.[11]

While the relationship with 'implementing partners' (allocation of funds, monitoring and evaluation) is an integral part of the work of field offices, the NGOs have no part in shaping the UNHCR's operation. Because the UNHCR funds them, and because they recognise its expertise in matters of asylum on the global scale, it is rather they who 'follow' the UNHCR's systems and align their activities with the priorities and the frames of understanding of the UNHCR. It is the NGOs that apply to the UNHCR for funding and attend meetings at the organisation's offices. This chapter therefore focuses on other nonstate actors with a stronger influence on the UNHCR's presence in Afghan territory: the village councils and the Taliban. The concept of 'field' flattens all the contexts in which the UNHCR operates. Examining the way in which the UNHCR negotiates its legitimacy with actors who do not necessarily recognise its claims to neutrality, global encompassment and expert knowledge can reveal the multiple arenas of power hidden behind this concept.

The UNHCR and the *Shura*

I spent most of my time in Afghanistan in the UN-level circles of the UNHCR, moving between the agency's offices and its residential quarters. It was therefore with trepidation that, one winter morning in 2007, I joined a team from the Kabul Sub-Office on a 'field mission' to the Bagrami district, adjacent to Kabul district. Although NGOs act as intermediaries, it is vital for the UNHCR to evaluate the situation in the contexts where it operates and to monitor how it evolves. Sometimes the organisation decides to provide direct short-term aid. On average, the Kabul Sub-Office organised ten 'field missions' each week. The site to be visited was often a village or an outlying district of Kabul where returnees had settled.

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That day, the mission was a 'need assessment'. The district had been on the frontline between the Russians and the Mujahideen, and had been very badly hit by the conflict: a large proportion of the population had left during the 1980s and returned after 2001. The aim was therefore to gain an idea of the situation regarding housing and water supply in the main villages of the district, in order to decide on allocation of shelters and water-related projects for 2008. The team consisted of four Afghan officers, who were to assess three villages between them.

In the car park at the UNHCR compound, I got into the vehicle with Salim, who was leading the mission. These missions are conducted from white 4x4s marked with the UNHCR's blue emblem on the two doors. The vehicles were a sort of mobile extension of the offices, dominating the road thanks to their size, highly visible with their big blue logos, and while seated in them the passengers remained in the UN space (see Figure 3.3). The city centre traffic gradually thinned out as we left the capital. In deference to the Afghan state, we stopped outside the office of the district chief on the main road in order to inform him of our destination and the reason for our visit. We set off again and the three vehicles separated. We left the metalled road. We passed alongside a large cemetery and then entered the village of Bot Khak. The 4x4 threaded its way along an alley that wound between the houses, some of them half-destroyed.

Salim had arranged a meeting with the members of the village *shura* (council), the assembly of notables and heads of family who represented the village in negotiations with the UNHCR.[12] In Afghanistan a meeting with the village council is an essential step in gaining permission to visit the site or interact with the people living there. We were met by a group of men who led us into a building at the centre of the village, and then into a small unheated room. Before entering, everyone took off their shoes. We sat in a circle on cushions and were served tea. Seven men were present, all swathed in blankets; all were bearded and wore a turban or a *pakol*[13] on their heads. The room was small and the walls were bare, except for a poster with a calligraphed sura from the Qur'an. Shortly afterwards, the village mullah joined us.

On every mission I joined,[14] when I got out of the UN vehicle I always had the impression of landing, of having been parachuted into another dimension, of being a stranger in a strange land. Like the vehicle-homes designed by Krzysztof Wodiczko, which enabled homeless people in New York to change their relationship with the city (Smith 1992), UN vehicles allow UN officers to 'jump scale', creating a bridge between sociopolitical orders that would otherwise remain impermeable to one another. Reference points disappeared and proportions changed. The 4x4s, an everyday sight in their space in the UNHCR compound or on the broad streets of Kabul, became incongruous on the unmade alleys of the villages where there were no other vehicles. Often

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there was nobody who spoke English. All of our interlocutors were men, making me abruptly and strangely aware of my belonging to a gendered order. Each time a field mission was planned, I made sure to wear loose clothing and bring a large shawl to cover my hair. Most expatriate women, even those who never usually paid attention to the way they dressed, pulled a scarf out of their bag as soon as they got out of the car. This gesture, whether considered or instinctive, marked the crossing of an invisible boundary: we were no longer in UN space.

For me, a young graduate in diplomatic relations, there was also a shift into an unfamiliar political landscape. In the *shura* hall, there were no representatives of the state. While some of the men worked for the local administration, it was not in this capacity that they were present. In this context, the rules of the game altered and matters were settled in a different way. These were no longer bureaucratic structures that operated on relatively familiar lines. I had no point of reference to situate these men, to understand their role and the legitimacy of their authority. The only way I could distinguish them was by the different kinds of hat they wore: as an Afghan colleague had explained, the turban indicates a higher status and the cloth hat a religious role. To begin with, I found it hard to conceive of these meetings as diplomatic encounters in their own right. Although we were not sitting in suits around a table as I had imagined during my studies, but rather on the ground, in *pashmina*s and long sweaters, these meetings are fully functioning political arenas, where the modalities of distribution of UNHCR resources are at stake. The UNHCR bypasses the authority of the state, negotiating directly with power structures that carry more weight at the local level.

In the UNHCR's discourse and practices, these close interactions with bodies like the *shura*s[15] are often hidden and/or minimised, effectively reproducing the thinking centred on the state as national order. The *shura*s are not recognised as political interlocutors at the same level as state authorities; they are relegated to the depoliticised and remote space of the 'field', and associated with 'social' or 'cultural' rather than political dynamics. The UNHCR frequently emphasises its direct relationship with refugees, who are represented as an amorphous mass of people in distress amid a breakdown of social structure. In this case, the question of local intermediaries and the sociopolitical structures in which the recipients are embedded is completely overlooked. When the organisation mentions these interlocutors, it usually speaks in terms of 'communities' and their 'representatives' (cf., for example, UNHCR 2007u), as if to reduce local structures of power to the familiar logic of the national order and democratic principles. Moreover, in terms of the internal hierarchy of the organisation, it is the lower-ranking offices and staff who are usually delegated to deal with relations with the *shura*s. Yet, on the ground, the UNHCR recognises the existence and importance of these

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interlocutors; after all, it is UNHCR officers who go out to meet them. If necessary, the Sub-Office head himself travels to sit with the members of the *shura* – which implies adopting their way of sitting – despite the fact that most UN officers are not comfortable crouching barefoot with their notebooks on their knees.

Very often, the determining factor that establishes the legitimacy of the UNHCR is the aid it can grant. The members of the *shura* almost invariably sought to capture resources and to maximise the aid they could obtain from the organisation. I was struck by how explicit they could sometimes be. On one occasion, the UNHCR team was met with the demand: 'What have you brought? What is the good news?' The welcome ceremonies could thus be understood either as a *captatio benevolentie*, a rhetorical appeal for goodwill, or as a way of reiterating the UNHCR staff's status as guests and foreigners in relation to the *shura*'s authority. It was a sparring match: one side had to distribute aid in a way that conformed to the institution's systems, while the others tried to capture and orient these resources.

I observed that some were highly skilled in interacting with representatives of international organisations: the words 'priority needs of the site' were uttered confidently by members of the *shura* and repeated in exactly the same way by people interviewed during site visits. In other cases it was clear that the members of the *shura* were unaccustomed to interacting with aid organisations, did not understand their criteria for intervention and struggled to find their place among the international actors who arrived at the site and to formulate their demands in a way that the latter could understand. In either case, it was the aid already provided or that which might be granted in the future that was key to establishing the legitimacy of the UNHCR's visits to the village, to being received by the *shura*, to speaking with people, visiting houses, etc. Neither the legal status of the organisation in international law nor the UN values it represents were relevant.

Out-of-Reach Afghanistan

On the map of the UNHCR's presence in Afghanistan (see Figure 3.5), as in much of the UNHCR staff's discourse, Afghanistan was treated as a homogenous jurisdiction, a unit, the arena where the Afghan state exercised its sovereignty. In the Kabul Branch Office, this map was the official point of reference, always appended to funding applications. Another map, which had to be circulated with discretion, represented an entirely different reality. It showed, at the district scale, which parts of Afghan territory were accessible to UN staff. On this map, the southeastern part of the country was an almost uninterrupted red band that extended right up to the outskirts of the capital.

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These regions were forbidden to UN staff, being considered too dangerous as they were under the de facto control of the Taliban.

The Taliban, which had been excluded from the peace process, had taken refuge in the tribal zones on the border with Pakistan. With the support of Pashtun tribal populations and transnational Islamist networks, they had reorganised and gradually resumed their fight in Afghanistan, counting on both the weakness of the government and the disappointed expectations of the population. The Taliban contested the legitimacy of the government in place and challenged it via attacks on its representatives and all those who collaborated with it, using explosive devices planted along roads and kidnappings (Giustozzi 2007). The main targets were the Afghan armed forces and police and the International Security Assistance Force (ISAF), but increasingly NGOs and international organisations were also being targeted.

The UN agencies hoped that the Taliban would not hamper their work, given the UN's long-established presence in the country and its potential role as mediator. UNHCR senior staff in particular counted on a degree of respectability they felt the organisation enjoyed thanks to its long-term presence and the aid it had provided since the 1980s to several million Afghans – including many Taliban, as some colleagues reassured themselves. Yet because the organisation's identification with the UN associated it with the NATO foreign forces, UNHCR staff were placed in a delicate position vis-à-vis the Taliban. Bound by the decisions taken by the Secretary-General and other UN bodies, the UNHCR was aligned with the reconstruction process guided by the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA). This also implied being associated with the international military intervention and its objectives, and providing unconditional support to the new Afghan government, whose legitimacy the guerrilla movement contested – hence the impossibility of negotiating with the Taliban in order to implement programmes.

Although part of Afghan territory according to international law, the south of the country was thus inaccessible to the UNHCR: the state's sovereignty was contested there and the UNHCR, trapped by its intergovernmental identity, was unable to negotiate access. In order to cross Helmand province by car, neither the UN identity of the UNHCR, nor human rights, which the organisation championed, nor the fact that it had resources to allocate constituted sufficient sources of legitimacy.

In 2007, while security measures were omnipresent in Kabul (see Chapter 5), in the east and the south, the UNHCR offices were under siege. In Jalalabad, Gardez and Kandahar, staff were confined within high-walled compounds protected by barbed wire and armed guards. They reduced their travel to a strict minimum; their field missions were rare and were carried out in armoured vehicles, often with an armed escort. A journalist returning from Gardez described the complex where the UNHCR staff lived and worked as a

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'camp'. For the Kandahar office, the siege situation had reached its height. On the red and green map, the city of Kandahar was virtually the only green point in the south of the country. International organisations' staff were confined in a space they could only leave by air. Staffing was reduced to a minimum and projects were evaluated by remote monitoring, via the few NGOs that had not left the region or the local administration.

This situation created major dilemmas for the operation's senior staff, who would have liked to intervene more in these regions, from which many returnees came and where clashes between the Coalition forces and the Taliban were leading many people to flee their villages. But the office's activity was so restricted that some wondered whether it would be better to close it. In the end the office was kept open: for the senior staff, closing it would have felt as if they were completely abandoning their mission and capitulating to the Taliban. The critical stakes of the debate on closing the office were brutally demonstrated in November 2011, when the Kandahar office was subjected to an attack that killed three UNHCR employees and injured two.

A Diffused Structure

The distribution of UNHCR offices corresponds to the organisation's need to interact with many different interlocutors in order to pursue its mission. These actors are the axes around which its deployment is shaped. The need to have 'connections' on multiple fronts is manifested in a presence that could be described as diffuse not only geographically but also in terms of the multiple arenas in which the organisation operates and negotiates its legitimacy: multilateral forums, state authorities in each country, nonstate actors, etc. Interactions with all these actors shape the UNHCR's bureaucracy, in the sense that the form and activities of the offices are designed to interact in one or other of these arenas. In addition to verticality and encompassment, a third principle of *diffusion* can therefore be identified in the spatiality of the UNHCR. The UNHCR's range of diffusion is more extensive and dispersed than that of states (whose administrations are focused largely on their own territories), of other international organisations (more concentrated within the interstate arena) and of NGOs (in direct contact with the recipients of projects, but less present in multilateral forums and interactions with governments).

Following UNHCR officers as they 'jump scale' in their work, moving from one political order to another, helps to identify the way in which the UNHCR understands the global political space and the nature of the political order in which it operates. Embedded in the interstate sphere, this UN order emerges in a subtle play of affirming and bypassing the principle of state sovereignty. For it is on the basis of representations of the verticality and encompassment

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of states, and thereby reasserting them, that the organisation defines a worldwide supranational scale that in its turn encompasses the role of states. In the UNHCR's system of representations, modelled on the interstate system, non-state interlocutors – described variously as 'nongovernmental organisations', 'local communities' or 'insurgents' – are of lower status and are not considered political actors in their own right in the same way as states. Yet it is often necessary to establish the organisation's legitimacy with these actors, who do not always recognise its claims to neutrality and universalism. While for the *shura*s the aid provided was an important source of legitimacy, in the case of the Taliban, an irresolvable conflict of legitimacy prevented the organisation from operating in half of the Afghan territory, despite the agreement of state authorities.

Notes

1. Since then, the size and area of activity of the UNHCR have grown still further: at the end of 2021, it had some 18,000 employees and 523 offices spread over 135 countries (UNHCR 2022).
2. In this case it is the UNHCR that is 'hosted' by the state.
3. For the model agreement, see UNHCR (n.d.). This refers explicitly to Article 35 of the 1951 Convention.
4. As happened in Uzbekistan in 2006: following the breakdown of relations with the Uzbek authorities, the UNHCR had to withdraw from the country.
5. The substantial flow of arms and funding from the United States was coordinated by the CIA, and then channelled by the Pakistani secret services, which were managing relations with representatives of the Afghan political parties (Centlivres and Centlivres-Demont 1999; Coll 2004; Rashid 2000; Roy 1985). The UNHCR's programmes in Pakistan offered a prime example of the dilemmas the organisation faced during the Cold War (Fielden 1998; Ghufran 2011; Grare 2003; Marsden 1992; Rizvi 1990; Schöch 2008).
6. At the time, the organisation had not yet started working on behalf of 'internally displaced persons'.
7. This situation changed during the 2000s, following a growing influx of asylum seekers into Southern Europe and the strengthening of border controls.
8. To 'visit the UN', the visitor must go to UN headquarters, the most visited location in New York. UN agencies are also often performatively represented by their buildings. On this point, see Beauguitte (2011), who notes that the objects most frequently represented on UN stamps are the buildings that house the organisation's main bodies, and that these places are always portrayed as isolated from their surroundings.
9. Guided visits to headquarters for tourists are conducted in groups and follow preset itineraries.
10. Only the computers in offices had access to the full range of functions.
11. In 2018, the UNHCR drew on the support of 800 NGOs throughout the world (UNHCR 2019).

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12. Centlivres and Centlivres-Dumont describe the *shura* as one of the new social forms that, like Afghan NGOs, emerged during the 1990s when international organisations came to Afghanistan and encouraged the formation of pluralist and representative village assemblies in order to bypass the commanders (Centlivres and Centlivres-Dumont 1999: 957). During the 2000s, a new form of assembly, the Community Development Councils, was created under the National Solidarity Programme (Monsutti 2012).
13. A woollen hat.
14. The Kabul Sub-Office is the closest one to the Branch Office. During the year I spent in Kabul, I joined the Sub-Office team on fifteen field missions, including visits arranged for donors.
15. See, for example, the system of *malek*s (notables) in Pakistan, who organised the distribution of aid in the camps (Centlivres and Centlivres-Dumont 1999: 951; Edwards 1986: 319–20).

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