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Negotiating Futures in Palestinian Refugee Camps

Spatiotemporal Trajectories of a Refugee Nation

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ACADEMIC DISSERTATION
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Abstract

Palestinian refugee camps have been housing Palestinians for seven decades. They were formed after 1948, when in the process of establishing Israel as a Jewish state the majority of Palestinians living in Mandatory Palestine were dispossessed. Over these decades, the camps have become a durable part of the Middle Eastern landscape, and several generations of refugees have already been born, and are living, in them. Despite the fact that Palestinian camps have also been framed as temporary, not only by definition but also in the national narratives stressing the right to return to Palestine, in practice the camps have become sites where lives are lived and futures built.

Due to their long history, unique institutional framework, and strong connotation as centers of Palestinian political struggle, Palestinian refugee camps have their own specificities that affect how they frame the life of their dwellers. Yet, this dissertation is not an ethnography of the camps per se; the aim is rather to look through them in order to explore the manifold futures that are negotiated by the Palestinian refugees dwelling in them, and especially by those just reaching adulthood. This ethnographic study has been conducted in several refugee camps in Jordan, Lebanon, and the West Bank. A multi-sited approach was adopted with the presumption that the context of refugeeness affects the ways in which futures are imagined. Palestinian refugees have been positioned differently in these places: as stateless and excluded in Lebanon, as refugee-citizens in Jordan, and as being among their own people yet enduring the difficulties of the oppressive Israeli occupation in the West Bank. Understanding these contextual specificities in the different host sovereigns has hence been central to the aims of this work.

In this dissertation I argue, in line with ontological hermeneutics, that it is not possible to explore the future without first addressing the differing pasts and present conditions of the refugees. Therefore, to understand these differing experiences of Palestinian refugees living under the three host sovereigns, I start by looking at the histories that form the present realities through which Palestinians look to, have hopes for, and plan for their futures. The histories of Palestinian refugeeness have witnessed violence, multiple displacements, and enduring uncertainty. In all the fields that were included in this research it was the camp that embodied the difficulties of

being a refugee. The material living conditions, crowdedness, camp community, and relations with the surrounding area and society, as well as the identificational and political connotations, have all affected how the camps have been experienced as places of dwelling by my interlocutors. In many ways they were considered inadequate in terms of providing the hoped-for standards of living, yet simultaneously they formed a significant community that was viewed from a positive perspective, though more so in the West Bank and Jordan than in Lebanon. Nevertheless, while the camps functioned as a marker of Palestinian refugeeness, and were even equated with Palestine and the right of return, as everyday spatialities they left much to be desired.

Similarly, this research shows that the possibilities available to the refugees under the host sovereigns were not usually enough for my interlocutors to achieve their aspirations. Hence many – especially in Lebanon and the West Bank, though for different reasons – have come to consider that emigration could fulfil their hopes and provide better conditions for them and their families. Better futures were negotiated via different routes – education, employment, and marriage being the ones explored here. While both return and the national future of Palestine also emerged in these negotiations, they were situated in a different, more abstract timeframe, not one that could provide better possibilities or enhancements in the deprived conditions faced in everyday life.

The specificity of Palestinian refugees' negotiations on the future nevertheless emerges from this discrepancy between the national and the personal. On the level of national discourse, Palestinian refugees (especially those living in camps) are people steadfastly waiting for the return, enduring life in the camp and fighting for the national cause. However, on the level of the everyday, they are – as is anyone – aiming to improve their situation with the means available and, as became evident in my ethnography, in the present situation and in light of past experiences those means direct their attention somewhere other than to the political objectives they hold as Palestinian refugees. This, I claim, reflects the difficulties that Palestinian refugees living in the camps face: they are not in a secure enough position to have the luxury of "waiting out" or to concentrate on the political in its national manifestation. Rather, they are forced to negotiate the options at hand, to reach out in those directions where possibilities are available.

Tiivistelmä

Palestiinalaispakolaiset ovat eläneet pakolaisleireillä jo seitsemän vuosikymmentä. Heidän pakolaisuutensa juontuu vuodesta 1948, jolloin Israelin valtion perustamisen yhteydessä enemmistö alueen palestiinalaisesta väestöstä joutui pakenemaan kotiseuduiltaan. Vuosikymmenten aikana pakolaisleirit ovat tulleet osaksi Lähi-idän maisemaa, ja niillä on kasvanut ja elänyt jo useita palestiinalaissukupolvia. Leirien pitkästä historiasta huolimatta niitä on kuitenkin pidetty väliaikaisina; määritelmällisesti leiri on aina olemassa vain rajatun ajanjakson ja palestiinalaisten kansallisissa narratiiveissa, jotka painottavat paluuta Palestiinaan, niitä ei ole ajateltu pysyvinä asuinpaikkoina. Käytännössä leirit kuitenkin muodostavat olosuhteet, joissa palestiinalaispakolaiset elävät arkeaan ja rakentavat tulevaisuuttaan.

Pitkän historiansa, ainutlaatuisen institutionaalisen viitekehyksen sekä palestiinalaisten poliittiseen kamppailuun linkittyvien merkitysten takia leirit luovat omanlaisensa puitteet niillä asuvien pakolaisten elämälle. Tässä tutkimuksessa en silti tarkastele vain leirejä itsessään vaan lähestyn niiden kautta sitä, miten niillä asuvat palestiinalaiset neuvottelevat tulevaisuudentoiveitaan. Tämä etnografiaan pohjaava tutkimus on toteutettu Libanonissa, Jordaniassa ja Länsirannalla usealla eri pakolaisleirillä. Valitsin monikenttäisen lähestymistavan sillä lähtöoletuksella, että pakolaisuuden konteksti vaikuttaa merkittävästi siihen, miten tulevaisuuksia kuvitellaan. Palestiinalaispakolaisten asemamassa onkin merkittäviä eroja näillä kolmella alueella: Libanonissa he elävät ilman kansalaisuutta ja sen tuomia oikeuksia, Jordaniassa enemmistö pakolaisista on samanaikaisesti sekä maan kansalaisia että pakolaisia ja Länsirannalla palestiinalaispakolaiset joutuvat muiden länsirantalaisten tavoin kohtaamaan Israelin väkivaltaisen miehityspolitiikan. Näiden kontekstuaalisten erojen ja niiden vaikutusten ymmärtäminen on ollut tutkimuksen keskiössä.

Tutkimuksen lähtöoletuksena on lisäksi ontologisen hermeneutiikan mukaisesti se, että tulevaisuuden tarkastelu ei ole mahdollista ilman, että ymmärtää menneen, nykyisyyden ja näiden välisen suhteen. Tästä syystä käyn läpi eri kentillä asuvien palestiinalaisten historiaa ja etenen leirien nykyolosuhteiden tarkasteluun. Nämä ajallisuudet luovat pohjan pakolaisten tulevaisuudentoiveiden ymmärtämiselle.

Palestiinalaispakolaisten historia on täynnä väkivaltaa, pakenemista ja jatkuvaa epävarmuutta, ja pakolaisleirit ovat tilana tiivistäneet pakolaisuuteen liittyvät vaikeudet niin historiallisesti kuin nykyäänkin. Materiaaliset olosuhteet, ahtaus, suhde ympäröivään paikkaan ja yhteisöön sekä leirin identiteetilliset ja poliittiset konnotaatiot ovat kaikki vaikuttaneet siihen, miten tähän tutkimukseen osallistuneet palestiinalaispakolaiset kokivat elinolosuhteensa. Leirien ei koettu pystyvän tarjoamaan toivottua elintasoa, mutta samanaikaisesti ne muodostivat merkityksellisen yhteisön, johon liitettiin useita positiivisia ominaisuuksia. Leirit muodostivat myös osan pakolaisten poliittista identiteettiä: ne muistuttivat niillä asuvien pakolaisuudesta ja muodostivat linkin Palestiinaan ja siten ylläpitivät vaatimusta paluuoikeudesta. Kuitenkin, näistä positiivisista puolista huolimatta, elettyinä tiloina leirit eivät pystyneet luomaan toivottuja puitteita arjelle.

Tässä tutkimuksessa painottuu myös se, että Libanonissa, Jordaniassa ja Länsirannalla tarjolla olleet mahdollisuudet eivät useinkaan riittäneet toivotun tulevaisuuden saavuttamiseen. Maastamuutto olikin monelle tapa kuvitella parempaa tulevaisuutta niin itselle kuin perheelle, erityisesti Libanonissa ja Länsirannalla. Parempaa tulevaisuutta neuvoteltiin useita eri reittejä, ja tässä tutkimuksessa keskityn erityisesti koulutuksen, työn ja naimisiinmenon tarjoamiin mahdollisuuksiin. Vaikka myös kansalliset tulevaisuudet, Palestiina ja paluuoikeuden toteutuminen nousivat esiin näissä neuvotteluissa, ilmenivät ne kuitenkin abstraktimmalla tasolla ja eri aikajanalla, kuin tulevaisuudet, joilla haettiin parempia mahdollisuuksia saavuttaa henkilökohtaiset elämäntavoitteet ja helpotusta arjessa kohdattuihin vaikeuksiin.

Palestiinalaispakolaisten tulevaisuuskäsitysten erityisyys on juuri henkilökohtaisen ja kansallisen tulevaisuuden välille muodostuvassa ristivedossa. Kansallisen narratiivin mukaan pakolaisten (erityisesti leireillä asuvien) oletetaan sisukkaasti odottavan paluuta, kestävän pakolaisuuden haasteet ja taistelevan kansallisten tavoitteiden puolesta. Samanaikaisesti pakolaiset kuitenkin pyrkivät parantamaan arkeaan, elinolosuhteitaan ja mahdollisuuksiaan tarjolla olevin keinoin. Etnografiassani painottui erityisesti tämä henkilökohtainen puoli ja se, että kansallisten tavoitteiden saavuttamisen ei koettu pystyvän tarjoamaan parannusta pakolaisuuden historian muovaamiin nykyolosuhteisiin riittävän nopealla aikataululla. Väitänkin, että henkilökohtaisten tulevaisuuksien ensisijaisuus heijastaa leireillä asuvien palestiinalaisten kohtaamia vaikeuksia: heidän asemansa ja tulevaisuutensa ei ole tarpeeksi turvattu, jotta he voisivat odottaa ja keskittyä kansallisten tavoitteiden ajamiseen. Sen sijaan palestiinalaispakolaiset ovat pakotettuja tarttumaan tällä hetkellä tarjolla oleviin vaihtoehtoihin ja pyrkimään niihin suuntiin, joissa mahdollisuudet parempaan elämään ovat tarjolla.

Contents

Acronyms

EU	European Union
IDF	Israel Defense Forces
NGO	Non-governmental organization
PA	Palestinian Authority
PFLP	Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine
PHRO	Palestinian Human Rights Organization
PLO	Palestine Liberation Organization
UN	United Nations
UNCCP	United Nations Conciliation Commission for Palestine
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization
UNHCR	United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees
UNIFIL	United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon
UNRWA	United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East
UNSCOP	United Nations Special Committee on Palestine

Note on Arabic transcription

In this dissertation, I have chosen to use a simplified system for transcribing Arabic terms. For the sake of simplicity, I have not used diacritical marks to differentiate between soft and hard letters or short and long vowels, nor to identify letters not found in Latin script. The majority of the terms used have established forms in English (e.g. fedayeen, intifada, Mukhabarat), and when this is not the case I have maintained the dialect pronunciation used by my interlocutors. With place names, I have used the official or commonly used forms. In the case of the camps, I have opted for the official English names used by UNRWA even when these do not correspond with the pronunciation of the original Arabic names (e.g. Kalandia instead of Qalandia, Aida instead of 'Ayda) and when there exist other established transcriptions (e.g. Ein El Hilweh instead of Ain el-Hilweh).

Introduction

The protagonists of this dissertation are Palestinian refugees and, more specifically, the Palestinian refugees living in refugee camps in Lebanon, Jordan, and the West Bank. This is an account of their lives and futures, of how they build them in the conditions produced by the decades-long exile by navigating all the obstacles their positions place in their way. Their refugeeness stems from the year 1948, when establishing Israel as a Jewish state involved the expulsion of Palestinian Arabs from the areas on which the new state was to be founded. Close to 800 000 Palestinians were forced to flee, making them refugees or internally displaced. When the fighting had ceased by the end of the same year, those who had fled were prevented from returning to the homes they had left behind. These events are known as *Nakba*, the catastrophe and, till today, Israel continues to deny the Palestinians' right to return, and thus protracts Palestinians' existence as a refugee nation that is placed in differing vulnerable positions.

In this dissertation work I contribute to the wider academic discussions pertaining to Palestinian refugees' position in the Middle East. The specific aim is to discuss the refugees' futures. I introduce a multi-sited account that – by exploring the differing conditions Palestinian refugees occupy in the aforementioned places – examines the complex negotiations the refugees engage in when considering and planning their futures. By negotiation I mean the relational processes that aim to conciliate differing if not conflicting standpoints and which, in this case, revolve around both the (inter-)personal and the political.

The number of (registered) refugees in the region has multiplied over the decades, and at December 2019 almost 6,3 million[1] were listed in the records of the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA). This increase is due to the hereditary nature of the refugee status granted by UNRWA; at present, only a small minority of Palestinian refugees experienced Nakba at first hand, as the majority were born in exile. For them, life outside Palestine is all they have known: Palestine is the abstract, imagined spatiality of the past, whereas that of the camps and the host society, with all its inadequacies and instabilities, is the one they have to deal with in their everyday lives. Over the decades, the percentage of Palestinian refugees living in the camps has fluctuated as

people have moved out from them, from one camp to another, from an official camp to an unofficial camp or the other way around, or out of the host country altogether. At present, there are a total of 58 official refugee camps in UNRWA's field of operation: ten in Jordan, 12 in Lebanon, nine in Syria, 19 in the West Bank, and eight in the Gaza Strip. According to UNRWA statistics[2], the percentage of camp dwellers among all those registered by the agency is 28, varying between 17.3 percent in Jordan and 50.7 percent in Lebanon. There are no reliable statistics for Syria, due to its volatile situation, yet UNRWA's estimate of the percentage of camp dwellers there is 30.3, whereas in the West Bank it is 24.5 and in the Gaza Strip it rises to 37.8. The great majority of registered Palestinian refugees are thus not dwelling in UNRWA camps but within the host communities or in unofficial camps and gatherings not officially managed by UNRWA. That the refugee camps are, nevertheless, at the center of this research derives from their specificity as spaces and from the ways in which they are signified in Palestinian national narratives.

When the fieldwork for this dissertation was conducted in 2015 and 2016, first in Lebanon, then in the West Bank and lastly in Jordan, the fourth generation of refugees was already reaching early adulthood[3], and the reality in which they were beginning their adult lives was very different from that faced by the first-generation refugees when they settled in the camps in the late 1940s and early 1950s. Much has happened since 1948, and it has left its marks on the conditions Palestinians face in the fields with which this dissertation engages. Jordan, Lebanon, and the West Bank all have their uniqueness when it comes to the position Palestinian refugees occupy, ranging from that of the closely surveilled citizen-refugee in Jordan to that of the stateless and rightless outcast in Lebanon, and of the ungrievable subject of the violating Israeli occupation in the West Bank. These social, political, and economic conditions molded by the histories of exile not only define the present life of my interlocutors but also reflect the possibilities that are available to them when they consider their futures.

These temporal considerations are at the forefront of this research, which I approach with hermeneutic understanding that stresses the interwoven nature of past, present, and future. Understanding both past and present is central in considering how Palestinian refugees negotiate the possibilities they have for achieving the future they aspire to live. The term negotiation implies the existence of competing or conflicting demands, and that there is a need to reconcile these, or to work to find a solution in difficult circumstances. Hence, by approaching the future as something that needs to be negotiated, I aim to stress how for my interlocutors future is not in any sense a straightforward matter; it requires navigating

both possibilities and, at times, conflicting obligations in conditions in which opportunities are often severely limited. Hence, the hoped-for or aspired-to future is not only something that is simply planned, expected, or anticipated but something that, due to the political and social circumstances, has to be negotiated between "sites of agency" and "fields of possibilities" (Appadurai 1996: 31), and socially and politically imposed obligations and expectations.

These negotiations that the "relational selves" (Joseph 1999) engage with involve not only the individuals among their significant kin that exists in the wider community that dwells in the specific conditions, but also the national narratives and political discourses that position Palestinian refugees and the refugee camps in a particular manner in terms of spatiotemporal commitments. The most important component of these national aspirations is the return to Palestine. The call for the right to return has been at the center of the refugees' political existence and has defined many aspects of their lives since the first years of refugeeness. Furthermore, especially since the emergence of Palestinian resistance as a prominent force in the late 1960s, the pre-Nakba past has been utilized in building the refugee identity, and the camps themselves have become a symbol of the refugeeness that forces the world to remember the injustices of Palestinian displacement. Even when the material realities have evolved, the camps have been framed as temporary dwellings, as places that house the refugees until they are allowed to return to Palestine. In this trajectory depicted by the national narratives, Palestinian refugees are to remember the past lived in Palestine, endure the difficulties and suffering that their refugeeness impose on them, and wait, and fight, to return to Palestine. In this narrative, the camps are a symbol of steadfastness (*sumud*) and of commitment to Palestine, and refugees bear a special responsibility to enhance the national objectives.

These national framings have been negotiated by Palestinian refugees in different ways at different times, and they are by no means unchangeable, as the refugees have been active in defining them to serve political purposes. There is, nevertheless, a strong internalization of the role of the refugee as a suffering subject who is steadfast and remains waiting in the camps in order to struggle and prove their commitment to returning to Palestine (see Allan 2014: 44–45, 172–174; Farah 1999: 202, Gabiam 2016; Peteet 2000). Simultaneously, however, the living conditions in the refugee camps and host societies call for a more immediate chance of a better life, one that might not be in line with the ideals posited in the national narratives. It is from this discrepancy that the main research question of the dissertation emerges: *How are Palestinian refugees negotiating the futures they hope to achieve when they have to consider not only the present conditions molded by the histories and politics of the host societies but also the national*

narratives and their social and material manifestations? I explore this question specifically in terms of how it is encountered by young adults, as they form the cohort whose futures are most comprehensively affected by the insecurities of the present, as I will elaborate in the following chapters. This focus emerges specifically when I elaborate the future tense, whereas past and present are approached from a more general perspective. Furthermore, by concentrating on the negotiation, I hope to include the different dimensions that are part of the process: the cultural, societal, material, economic, and political conditions that create the position from which the futures are considered.

This main question raises a set of other questions that are addressed in the chapters of this research. What, for instance, are the actual conditions and how do they affect the everyday lives of Palestinian refugees in the present (chapter 5)? How do they direct their aspirations, and how do they enable the life to which my interlocutors aspire? And what about the differences between refugee locations? How did these differing conditions come about, and how do the differing histories affect the positioning of Palestinian refugees (chapter 4)? And finally, what kind of possibilities are at the refugees' disposal to achieve the future they hope for (chapter 6) and what are the concrete steps they take toward this goal (chapter 7)? How are the Palestinian refugees, and especially the younger generations who are still in the process of building their adult lives, able to imagine their futures (chapters 7 and 8)? The overriding assumption behind these questions is that none of the temporalities is a simple matter for Palestinian refugees. The past reminds them of the multiple displacements, the injustices, the problems that have at times been violent in nature, the ongoing denial of their rights, and the continuing lack of a sovereign that would care for them. The present carries all these histories within itself. The present is in many ways defined by uncertainty and instability, born out of the specific position of Palestinian refugees and the general economic and political situation in the region, both of which produce insecurity and vulnerability that inevitably affect the ways in which the future is viewed.

As these questions suggest, what is important is not only the temporality but also the spatiality, and it is the intertwined nature of the two that helps in understanding the Palestinian refugee condition. Hence, throughout the dissertation I will consider Palestinian refugees' situation from both spatial and temporal perspectives. By this I mean taking into account the temporal trajectories of the refugee communities and the spatial specificities of their being, both lived and imagined. The multi-sited approach allows for a comprehensiveness in exploring Palestinian refugee conditions that is not possible in single-site ethnography. I consider how the differences

between (and similarities in) the conditions and positionings in my different sites are reflected in the lived realities, and therefore in the possibilities of overcoming the shortcomings of the present.

While many of the topics discussed in the following chapters have been elaborated previously in other studies, my specific aim is not to concentrate on the conditions in their own right but to consider how they form the context for negotiating the future. Exploring the past and the present thus serves the aim of understanding what is wanted from the future. Furthermore, though this is not a comparative research study in the most traditional sense, I nevertheless hope to demonstrate the complexities of the Palestinian refugee condition through ethnographic material from different sites of refugeeness. The multi-sited approach allows me to observe the interconnectedness of temporality and spatiality, to note that differences in experienced pasts and presents produce differences in the ways in which my interlocutors direct themselves toward the future, even in a context in which there are strong national identifications and aspirations that tie the different refugee communities together. Before getting into the three sites and the ethnographic material that helps in achieving these aims, I turn to the methodological and theoretical framework of this dissertation, starting by situating it in the wider field of studies on Palestinian refugees.

1.1   Academic inspirations

In refugee studies, there has been a long tradition of considering Palestinian refugees as a special case, one with such unique historical, spatial, institutional, and political configurations that it should be treated as exceptional among all other refugee contexts, in the Middle East and beyond (Couldrey & Morris 2006; Dumber 2005; Kagan 2009). However, from an anthropological perspective, such an approach makes little sense, as an anthropologist should be able to find both uniqueness and complex relationalities in every refugee situation. That said, both the specific institutional framework within which Palestinian refugees exist and the political conditions that affect their being have structured their refugee existence, and the research on Palestinian refugees has for its part tried to make sense of these differentiating aspects and experiences of the exile. As Palestinian refugees have been studied from multiple perspectives for decades, there is a vast literature to engage with, and in the following chapters, especially in the ethnographic ones, I draw from this large pool of scholarly work. Here, however, I concentrate on introducing those

scholars whose work has more comprehensively influenced the forming of the premises of this dissertation.

One such anthropologist is the pioneer in this field, Rosemary Sayigh. Sayigh was one of the first to do ethnography in the Palestinian refugee camps, and her work among the camp dwellers in Lebanon – concentrating especially on women, experiences of Nakba and everyday life, and oral history – has been an inspiration to many following in her footsteps (on the significance of Sayigh's work, see Doumani & Soukarieh 2009). Her accounts have allowed me to explore the topics covered in this research from a historical perspective, seeing the changes and continuities that have taken place. Her books *Palestinians: From Peasants to Revolutionaries: A People's History* (1979) and *Too Many Enemies: The Palestinian Experience in Lebanon* (2015, first edition published in 1994) were among the first to shed light on camp life and the many difficulties faced by the Palestinian communities in Lebanon. As Sayigh has lived in Lebanon for decades, her work concentrates on the Lebanese experience, but she has also depicted the conditions in other parts of the Arab world. Beshara Doumani and Mayssun Soukarieh (2009) further note that Sayigh has always been interested in the gender and class dimensions of the Palestinian refugee experience, since long before it gained prominence in wider academic discussions.

Another prominent scholar who has become known for her work in the camps in Lebanon is anthropologist Julie Peteet. Her books *Landscape of Hope and Despair: Palestinian Refugee Camps* (2005) and *Space and Mobility in Palestine* (2017) examine, respectively, the formation of Palestinian identity and its interplay with the space of a refugee camp in Lebanon, and the effects that the restricted mobility and enclosure that Palestinians experience in the West Bank have on the lives of refugees and non-refugees alike (see also Peteet 2011, 2016). Additionally, Palestinian resistance and its gendered dimensions are themes covered by Peteet (1991, 1994), but from the perspective of this research they remain in the background, helping to understand the wider context of Palestinian experience but being of no direct influence.

In Peteet's work, space and spatiality become defined through the processes of living but also in the relational coming-together of different temporal and spatial layers of Palestinian refugees' experiences. Peteet writes that "[t]he relationship between place and identity is more about the future than the past, more about where they are now and where they are going than simply about where they have been" (Peteet 2005: 216). Specifically, this intertwined nature of different yet related spatialities and temporalities is what this dissertation aims to address: how the future imaginaries are constructed through the past and present within the diverse conditions of Palestinian exile. Furthermore, in the more recent of the two books,

Peteet deals with the subjects of temporality and spatiality when scrutinizing the practices of closure, limited movement, and shrinking space. In particular, her discussion on waiting and how it manifests in Palestinians' lives (Peteet 2017: 139–168) has been relevant to this research.

Luigi Achilli's (2014, 2015) ethnography on the Palestinian refugee camp of Wihdat, located in East Amman, is one of the few anthropological studies I came across when reviewing the research carried out on Palestinian refugees living in Jordan. Again, the research has contributed more on the contextual than the thematical level, but it nevertheless provides an important view on camp life in the Jordanian context, which seems rather under-researched compared with the two other fields. Nell Gabiam's work, on the other hand, has contributed specifically on a thematic level as her fields are separate from mine, her ethnography having been conducted in the camps of Neirab, Ein el Tal, and Yarmouk in Syria. Her research (Gabiam 2016) concentrates on scrutinizing UNRWA's humanitarian and development-oriented practices and how they have been negotiated vis-à-vis the discourse on suffering that is associated with maintaining the right of return, and hence it has been fruitful to juxtapose my own observations with Gabiam's explorations on the politics of camp materiality.

Of great influence on all levels has been the work of Ilana Feldman. Having conducted historical anthropology especially in and on Gaza, Feldman has contributed to discussions on the humanitarian condition, scrutinizing topics such as humanitarian recognition (2012a, 2015a) and life in humanitarian spaces (2012b, 2015b). She has shown how humanitarian apparatuses, in this case UNRWA, have been utilized by Palestinian refugees in gaining visibility and recognition (e.g. Feldman 2008) but also how their definitions, for example of refugee camp, have been at least partially internalized by the refugees (Feldman 2015a). Feldman has also written on the future dimension of Palestinian refugees' experiences (2016), coming very close to my own interests. Feldman notes that Palestinians have a range of available frameworks for imagining the future, and she looks at how Palestinians encounter the forthcoming within the political. Following Kathleen Stewart (2007), she explores "the politics of ordinary affect" in cases of Palestinians' reactions to the Palestinian Authority's (PA) attempts to seek recognition for the Palestinian state in the UN, and the grassroots redefinition activities within the West Bank-based civil society initiative, Campus in Camps. Yet, rather than concentrating on the political futures as discussed by Feldman, I aim to consider the topic on a more personal level, particularly focusing on how my interlocutors are trying to build their lives in a manner that would enable a brighter future for them and their families.

Nevertheless, I stress throughout the work that even in these personal negotiations the political cannot be sidelined.

In fact, this whole dissertation project started from an interest in the political. My initial idea was to explore the spatial and temporal understandings of the right of return, in other words, how the refugees living in the camps imagined the spatialities of the future return. Having encountered numerous refugees who had repeated the political narrative on the right of return, and read about plans and statistics regarding the possible forms of return (e.g. Abu-Sitta 1997; Shenhav 2012; Shikaki 2014), I became interested in what those who would actually experience the return thought about it. However, when I talked with Palestinian refugees in Lebanon during my first visit to the camps in Tyre in the spring of 2015, I soon came to notice that the future was discussed in entirely different terms, which made the concentration on return seem rather forced. Right of return emerged as part of the political discourse, which represented something different than everyday life. The discourse on, and even the actual hope for, return is there as one dimension, but in Tyre I encountered a reality in which the future was discussed and planned for in an infinitely more complex, multilayered and, one could say, practical manner than that depicted in the nationalist narratives.

The right of return has, nevertheless, often been explored in scholarly work, and its political centrality when presenting the wishes of Palestinian refugees cannot be sidelined. As I had somewhat internalized the importance of presenting the Palestinian case in a politically appropriate manner, I was pleased to encounter Diana Allan's (2014) work on the future in its personal dimension, which is based on an ethnography made with Palestinian refugees living in Shatila refugee camp in Beirut. Her work resonates strongly with my own approach, from the presuppositions with which she started out to the conflicting reality she encountered in the field. In the introduction of her book *Refugees of the Revolution* (2014), Allan describes how she started her work in Shatila with the intention of exploring first-generation refugees' narratives on their villages of origin and the experiences of expulsion, in the hope of their shedding light on how Palestinians construct history and identity in exile (Allan 2014: 6). She was working on a project named Nakba Archive, and her personal research was to be related to it.

Yet, after spending time in Shatila, Allan noticed a discrepancy between the nationalist narratives on Nakba and the right of return, and the grievances and aspirations that were salient for the refugees living in the camp. She notes the often-complex relationship that experienced everyday life and the hoped-for futures have with the nationalist narratives, and writes that in "the discourses of both nationalism

and international diplomacy, refugees have been reduced to symbols of historical and political grievances awaiting redress" (Allan 2014: 3). Scholars have for their part contributed to this understanding with an emphasis on continuities rather than discontinuities within Palestinian exile. Here, therefore, I aim to be sensitive to this tendency both by acknowledging these dimensions, which exist simultaneously in my fields, and by acknowledging the importance of the political narratives without letting them overshadow other aspects that are to be explored.

My research can thus be viewed as continuing with the themes introduced by Allan, by concentrating on the complexities, discontinuities, and multiplicities of futures voiced by Palestinian refugees. With the multi-sited ethnography that this dissertation leans on, I am able to further highlight the diversity of Palestinians' exilic condition, and how we should not talk about Palestinian refugees as a homogenous entity but recognize how the differing histories in different locations of exile have produced a range of experiences and realities within which futures are imagined and negotiated. Many of the themes that emerge in the dissertation have been explored in detail by numerous other scholars, and hence I do not claim to 'reveal' novel aspects of Palestinian refugees' existence; rather, my aim is to show how they frame the negotiations of the future. Many of the previously explored themes pertaining to Palestinian refugees' position and living conditions remain relevant due to the lack of any sort of positive political development, and they have intensified over the years, thus narrowing the horizon of possibilities rather than bringing about better opportunities for refugees to build their lives. Furthermore, the multi-sited methodology allows me to explore the relevance of positionings and conditions in a way that single-sited ethnography could not. The great majority of anthropological research on Palestinian refugees and refugee camps does not accommodate the different locations of Palestinian refugee exile, and it is, in fact, the multivocality and contextual depth enabled by the multi-sited ethnography together with the attention to ways of negotiating the future in this specific temporal context that constitute the novelty of this study.

1.2   The structure of the dissertation

The overall structure of the dissertation derives from the theoretical frame inspiring the study, that is the hermeneutic approach to temporality and being. The idea is that to understand the basis on which the future aspirations are negotiated, one needs to understand the present conditions that define the contemporary dwelling as well as

the pasts and histories that have molded it. Personal histories are, of course, of utmost importance in how one perceives one's possibilities but so are the collective ones. Collective experiences tell of the political conditions, of what it means to be a Palestinian refugee, and of the dimensions of everyday life that are shared precisely because one is identified, and also identifies, as a Palestinian refugee.

Before getting to the histories and ethnographic realities of the fields, in chapters 2 and 3 I introduce the research process and the theoretical discussions that I use in this work. I start by describing the multi-sited research process and the practical and ethical aspects that emerged along the way. Then, in chapter 3, I turn to introducing the hermeneutic approach that has defined this whole research, after which I look at the anthropological approaches to the future and consider spatiality from the perspectives that serve the purposes of this dissertation.

In chapter 4, I start to explore the questions that are at the center of this work. Though this is not yet a purely ethnographic chapter, I nevertheless turn to the fields as I provide a glimpse into the past. The aim is to view the Palestinian refugees' histories: how and why they were dispossessed, and how their lives have taken shape in the three fields explored here. By observing the trajectories of the three refugee communities, the aim is to build the basis for understanding the present positionings of the refugees but also to apprehend the pasts that the Palestinian refugee communities carry within, as they structure the pre-understandings of the possible, likely, and desirable.

After the history, in chapter 5 I turn to the ethnography, and to the present lived in the refugee camps. For my interlocutors, that present is defined by the camps and therefore I explore the different dimensions of camp life, and its differences and similarities across the three fields. The aim is to capture the frames of the everyday, as it is in these conditions that the futures are built. To understand what is wanted from the future, it is necessary to look at the manifold conditions of the present. The future always relates to the life at hand, and what is wanted from it is negotiated in the conditions of the present, both in what is deemed desirable and what is considered achievable.

In chapter 6, I turn to consider those things that can make hopes achievable, namely the resources Palestinian refugees have in their everyday lives, and which could facilitate a smooth flow from the present to the future. By this I mean the support networks that are available to Palestinian refugees to ease the precarities of everyday life. These are central in determining whether it is possible to live a good and dignified life, to enjoy a basic sense of security and trust rather than to experience dread for the future. The networks are of importance because they can be the

decisive factors in determining whether the present places of dwelling are considered to be livable to the extent that they carry into the future.

In the last two ethnographic chapters (chapters 7 and 8), I will finally turn to the future itself and look at the ways in which it is imagined and prepared for with decisions taken in everyday life. In the first of these chapters, I explore the future through my interlocutors' attempts to achieve the life they hope for. I do this by looking at how they evaluate their possibilities and negotiate amid the expectations, restrictions, and opportunities, and by exploring how they work to achieve their aspirations. In the final ethnographic chapter (chapter 8), I consider how these personal futures correspond, or conflict, with the more the political future, namely that of the national cause of Palestinian refugees. Through my interlocutors, I explore how the right of return, among other things, is negotiated in light of the present conditions, and how the national aspirations of Palestinians relate to the lives my interlocutors hope to live.

2 The research process: engaging with the fields

In this chapter I dwell on the methodological practices that form the basis for this dissertation. As any academic work situated in the anthropological tradition, this research is grounded first and foremost in the ethnographic encounters that took place in the field. In this work, however, it is not a single field that provides the material but three different ones, hence the multi-sited approach to ethnographic practices. The ethnographies for this dissertation were conducted in refugee camps in Lebanon, the West Bank, and Jordan, and it is this multi-sited approach that has allowed me to observe the continuities and discontinuities of Palestinian refugee conditions. I start by introducing the specificities of the multi-sited approach, after which I turn to the actual fieldwork experiences and to the encounters that took place while I was conducting them. Finally, I consider the ethical dimension of ethnographic research, in general, and the questions that arose while doing this research, in particular.

2.1 Multi-sited fieldwork in the context of prolonged exile

In a piece revisiting his earlier definitions of multi-sited ethnography, George E. Marcus (2011) explains that

> [t]he past habit of Malinowskian ethnography has been to take subjects as you find them in natural units of difference—cultures, communities; the habit or impulse of multi-sited research is to see subjects as differently constituted, as not products of essential units of difference only, but to see them in development—displaced, recombined, hybrid in the once popular idiom, alternatively imagined. (Marcus 2011: 19)

This attention to the displaced and scattered is precisely what motivated the multi-sited approach of this dissertation. From the very beginning, the premise was to explore the contextual specificities of Palestinians' refugeeness, as this allows for the formation of a multidimensional understanding of how the futures are negotiated in different conditions. Furthermore, in a world of complex translocal relations (Appadurai 1996), a bounded fieldsite has become an increasingly utopist idea and,

instead, the prefix "trans" has emerged as a major component of anthropological research. Among these discussions, my research constitutes an obvious case of multi-sited research (Marcus 1999: 6), as it deals with a dispersed community connected by a shared, yet by no means homogeneous, national identity (see Ali 2012; BADIL 2012) and by relations that cross multiple borders. The aim is to grasp the differing developments of a people that is often narrated as a single imagined community: the Palestinian refugees.

There naturally exists friction concerning the meanings of this identity and who is included in it, and on a personal level I even heard people announcing a rather exaggerated dislike of Palestinians living under another sovereign (cf. Sayigh 2012), yet the sense of connectedness was still there. Though physically separate sites, the different concentrations of Palestinian refugees are connected not only by a feeling of belonging to the same national whole, but also by concrete relations between people, the refugees' (limited) movement, institutional actors such as UNRWA and the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO), and shared experiences.

My research deals specifically with those who live in Palestinian refugee camps or in unofficial refugee gatherings. This decision was partly a practical one but it was also founded on the specificity of camp life. On a practical level, this concentration on camps helped me in approaching the field, especially so in the West Bank and Jordan where even among the registered refugees the great majority dwell outside the camps. In Lebanon, in most cases this means the unofficial gatherings, which are often in an even worse situation than the camps, whereas in the West Bank and Jordan, it means that they live in villages, towns and cities alongside other Palestinians or with Jordanians of multiple origin[4], and their living conditions are not necessarily defined by their refugeeness but are equivalent to those of their non-refugee neighbors.

This way of delimiting refugeeness based on camp residence is by no means unproblematic and, in Jordan, a friend of Palestinian origin suggested that all Palestinians are in fact refugees, because they are not able to live in freedom and either have been dispossessed and denied the possibility to live in their homeland or live under the threat of this. However, for my purpose, to have a degree of continuity between the separate fields it was practical to take the camp as a starting point, as a space that defines refugeeness and also marks it out. From a more theoretical perspective, the concentration on camp dwellers derives from the special characteristics associated with camps, both in theoretical considerations and in the Palestinian context. The camp frames life in a manner that is different from other places of dwelling, and the frame is different also because of the refugee camp's

centrality in the Palestinian national narratives, which I will turn to in the following chapters. I was interested in how those living in the camps actually saw their situation and imagined their futures.

Due to this focus on Palestinian refugee camps, my fields are all sites where UNRWA operates and has already granted refugee status to several generations of Palestinian refugees. According to UNRWA's definition, a Palestinian refugee is a person

> whose normal place of residence was Palestine during the period 1 June 1946 to 15 May 1948, and who lost both home and means of livelihood as a result of the 1948 conflict[5].

As refugee status granted by UNRWA is hereditary through the male lineage, most of those registered with UNRWA are, in fact, descendants of those who originally qualified as refugees. In my fieldwork I did not, however, ask whether my interlocutors had official UNRWA-granted status or whether, for one reason or another, they did not. Still, from the perspective of international recognition, Palestinian refugees means those living in the immediate vicinity of Israel/Palestine, in the countries where UNRWA operates and thus grants official refugee status. This understanding is not necessarily shared by Palestinians themselves, as exemplified by my friend's claim that all Palestinians are, in fact, refugees. This understanding came up especially in Jordan where Palestinians' refugee identity is often negotiated in relation to their Jordanian nationality. When I explained that my research was concentrating on those Palestinians who were living in the camps, and thus were the most likely to have official refugee status, an acquaintance in Jordan with a Palestinian background challenged this division by reminding me that he was also a refugee because his family had to flee and was prevented from returning. Nevertheless, the presence of UNRWA is a defining factor in all of my fields, and the agency also directed me when I was contemplating which sites to include in the research[6].

Naturally, embarking on this type of multi-sited ethnography introduces a set of challenges not encountered in the same manner when doing more traditional, site-bound ethnography. George E. Marcus has even stated that

> [t]hinking in terms of multi-sited research provokes an entirely different set of problems that not only go to the heart of adapting ethnography as practice of fieldwork and writing to new conditions of work, but challenge orientations that underline this entire research process that has been so emblematic for anthropology. (Marcus 1998: 3)

Not only does a multi-sited approach require more resources to reach and understand the many fields, it also necessitates adapting the expectations placed on anthropological research, as it challenges the Malinowskian tradition of fieldwork as the purest form of gaining ethnographic knowledge (Coleman 2006). When dealing with multiple sites, the thickness of the ethnography inevitably suffers, as it is not possible to dedicate as much time to a single site as in site-bound anthropology. But having multiple sites is also enabling, as it allows for the capturing of relations and processes not reached by traditional single-sited ethnography. It enables the capturing of people and goods on the move, the transnational dimension of both communities and matter, and the introduction of a comparative element that can shed light on the differences and similarities between the different sites. And in this research the aim is precisely that: to capture continuities and discontinuities of the Palestinian refugee condition in the separate yet connected fields and observe how the differing contexts construct the present everyday conditions in which the future(s) are negotiated.

Encountering(s in) the fields

The city of Tyre (Sour in Arabic) is located on the southern coast of Lebanon. It is the last large city before the way south is cut off by the hard, impassable border between Lebanon and Israel/Palestine (which in local speech, and on local maps and signposts, is named Palestine). Tyre carries multiple layers of history, the Roman ruins being rather recent and yet the most visible reminder of its long heritage. Being close to the border, it is not surprising that the city has also been a locale that has gathered together Palestinian refugees who fled from the northern parts of Mandate Palestine in 1948. Tyre's cityscape has come to be dotted with Palestinian presence like no other city in Lebanon: in the city and its immediate vicinity there are three refugee camps and several unofficial Palestinian neighborhoods known as gatherings.

While conducting fieldwork, I lived in one of these gathering with a Palestinian family. I also frequented all three camps – El Buss, Burj Shemali and Rashidieh – and visited, and conducted interviews in, the gatherings of Mashrou', Shabriha, Jal al-Bahar, Kofor Badda, and Nahr Samir. However, this being a multi-sited ethnography, Tyre was only one of the fields, the other two being in the West Bank and Jordan. In the West Bank, I stayed in Dheisheh refugee camp, just south of the city of Bethlehem, while I also conducted fieldwork in the Aida, Arroub, and

Kalandia camps. In Jordan, although I lived in Amman, the camp I focused on was Jerash camp, generally known as Gaza camp. I also had the chance to meet people in Baqa'a and Marka camps, located closer to Amman. In Jordan I also engaged with Palestinians who were not currently living in the camps but had grown up in them.

Seven out of the ten camps I visited during my fieldwork were founded in the aftermath of Nakba, meaning that they had existed for approximately 70 years. The three other camps were so-called emergency camps that were established in Jordan after the Six-Day War in 1967; hence, they have housed Palestinians for more than fifty years. All of the camps were not covered with the same intensity, as in some I did mostly interviews or visited organizations whereas in others I frequented them to meet close interlocutors or, in the case of the West Bank, lived in them. Yet, as the aim was not to concentrate on specific camps but to learn about the refugee contexts more widely, the ethnography was not limited to these camp spaces and included encounters inside and outside the camp borders.

What undoubtedly aided me in my venturing into the multiple fields was my long-term engagement with two of them, and a tentative familiarity with the third. I had frequented the West Bank since 2008, spending two to three weeks at a time there on four different occasions, and had coordinated a development cooperation project with a West Bank organization as a partner, before the two months I spent living in Dheisheh camp doing intensive fieldwork. I traveled to Lebanon for the first time in 2012, after which I spent five months there working in a Finnish research institute in 2013, returning again for ten months across 2014 and 2015. During the latter period I had already spent time in my fieldsites in Tyre, to which I returned for a two-month intensive period at the end of 2015. The most unfamiliar site for me was Jordan, where I had spent only a week before starting my fieldwork at the end of 2016. After the longer fieldwork periods, I have returned to each fieldsite: to Lebanon in 2016 and 2019, to the West Bank in 2019, and to Jordan also in 2019. Each visit was approximately two weeks in length.

That the specific camps ended up being the locus of the field engagement was due to the usual snowball effect: me having certain contacts that led to new ones and in the end created further access. In Lebanon I was given access to the camp communities by a field assistant, himself a middle-aged Palestinian refugee with broad connections to the camps and gatherings through his work. I conducted the majority of my formal interviews with him, and he was an important source of information. The initial access provided by him also enabled me to create my own connections, which further deepened the ethnography. In the West Bank, I utilized the networks I had created on several previous visits to the region, but also those

made available to me by my encounters in Lebanon. Moreover, I aimed to create new contacts by approaching people from different organizations working in the camps. Meetings with representatives of organizations provided general information, and served as links to the camp community, through which I was able to meet other people, who again aided me in gaining new contacts and interlocutors.

In the West Bank, the fieldwork thus took shape through several access points, and in Jordan I followed much the same strategy, with the difference being that I was not living in a camp myself. The most challenging site for me was, in fact, Jordan, and not only because it was the one where I had had the least prior engagement. Whereas in Lebanon and the West Bank people were generally eager to help and share their thoughts with me, in Jordan I faced more suspicion regarding my intentions and reluctance to follow through on agreed visits and appointments. Several access points to the camps, facilitated by people I had met at my two other fieldsites, dried up before they were able to create thicker involvement and, though I was able to find people willing to talk with me, the snowball effect proved hard to achieve. Hence, in Jordan my camp-based ethnography is the thinnest of the three fields and relies on a smaller number of interlocutors. I was, nevertheless, able to meet and interview several informants, which allowed me to comprehend the Jordanian contexts.

The experience of getting into the camps differed from one field to another. In the West Bank, the camps are effectively neighborhoods that anyone can walk into, as there is no enforced demarcation between the camps and their surroundings. In Lebanon, outsiders like me are required to obtain a permit from the Lebanese General Security Office in Saida, located approximately halfway between Beirut and Tyre, to enter camps that have Lebanese army checkpoints at the main entrances. All the camps in south Lebanon require such a permit. The permit is for three months and the system is applied in the same manner to both visitors and non-Lebanese and Palestinian individuals who are not registered in Lebanon but live permanently in the camps. In Jordan, on the other hand, camp entrances are not openly monitored in this manner, but official permits are nevertheless required from the Department of Palestinian Affairs, the governmental body dealing with issues relating to Palestinian refugees. However, I was advised not to apply for this kind of official approval, on the grounds that my actions would then be closely monitored by the *Mukhabarat*, the kingdom's intelligence agency. As my research did not necessitate long-term stays in a camp, I opted to continue living in Amman, visiting the camps without governmental approval, and also meeting my interlocutors outside the camps. This decision most likely affected the depth of my ethnography,

but it was taken simply because it was the most feasible way to proceed with the fieldwork.

Though the fieldwork took place mainly in these Palestinian camps, what was conducted was not strictly speaking an ethnography of the camps, in the sense that I would provide a detailed depiction of the social, political, and material rhythms of a given Palestinian refugee camp. In this dissertation, the aim was to embark on a multi-sited journey in order to understand *the conditions* of Palestinian refugees living in Lebanon, the West Bank, and Jordan. Hence, though deriving from specific camps and the aim of understanding life and living conditions in them, the overall objective of the fieldwork was somewhat more general. The attempt was to understand how these three contexts frame the lives of Palestinian camp refugees, the similarities and differences in their lived realities that stem not only from the immediate structuring of the camp but also from the social, political, and economic conditions of the host sovereign. That said, my interlocutors are nevertheless from specific refugee camps, and the camps affect their experiences, especially in the case of Jordan.

As my interest was in learning about the conditions the camp dwellers faced, I did not restrict myself to a single camp in each field, but rather took every available chance to engage with camp dwellers, no matter which camp they lived in. Furthermore, the actual encounters took place in multiple locations. I spent time in my interlocutors' homes and went to visit their friends' and relatives' places. I met them in cafés outside the camps, and we went for walks together, both inside the camps and in the surrounding cities. I sat in their workplaces and in organizations in which they were active, and I drove around with them to spend some of their leisure time in different places. I also participated in multiple events with them, both within the camps and elsewhere. This time spent with my interlocutors enabled me to observe the relational position of Palestinian refugees in each of my fields, and thus comprehend the conditions in which they lived their everyday lives.

At each site some encounters came to have more bearing on my research than others. In Lebanon, one such encounter was with Asma, then an 18-year-old first-year university student. Living with her parents in Burj Shemali camp, Asma was the youngest member of her family and the only sibling still living in her childhood home. Living in a camp and identifying as a Palestinian, Asma nevertheless had been granted Lebanese citizenship for historical reasons. Her family originated from one of the disputed border villages, hence, though dispossessed in Nakba, they had had Lebanese citizenship ever since. But as Asma often stressed, the citizenship provided only a nominal improvement in their position, because as people of Palestinian origin and dwellers of a camp they were still treated differently than the 'real' Lebanese.

Asma was outgoing and eager to spend time with me, and she is one of the individuals with whom I have stayed in touch back in Finland.

Living with a Palestinian family also profoundly shaped my field experience and gave me access to everyday situations, access that would not have been possible had I lived by myself. The intimacy of living together, however, created a condition in which I found it difficult to utilize private moments in ethnographic descriptions. When I do so, they reflect general issues, such as discussions on the position of Palestinians in Lebanon or the form of an Arab family, rather than the family's private situation. The knowledge I gained from the experience provided a mainly tacit understanding of the context, which allowed me to reflect on and analyze other encounters with more confidence.

In the same manner as with the Palestinian family in Lebanon, in the West Bank I also had a few important contacts who, while not explicitly present in the ethnographic descriptions, were important in my process of getting to know the camps and their situations. Yet, the most important interlocutors who are also verbalized were Nada and Nassim, from Kalandia and Dheisheh/Doha respectively. In 2016, Nada was 22 years old; she had returned from an exchange program in the United States some time previously and was preparing to leave again that autumn to continue her studies in California. Through relatives, Nada had US citizenship, but the exchange studies were the first time she had visited North America. Nada lived in Kalandia camp for the first twelve years of her life, but her family were then forced to move to the other side of the street from the camp, because they had a Jerusalem ID, which they would have lost without permanent residence within Jerusalem's borders. The family still had a house in the camp, but they permanently lived in the part of Kalandia that was within the Jerusalem municipality. I got in touch with Nada through a common acquaintance and had the chance to spend time with both her and her family.

In contrast, Nassim was a 25-year-old university student who lived with his family in Doha, the refugee municipality next to Dheisheh camp. Nassim was active in one of the organizations working in the camp, at which premises I met him for the first time. As well as sharing his personal views with me, he helped me to get in touch with other refugees living in Dheisheh. He was extremely critical of the collective ways in which Palestinians, in general, and Palestinian refugees, in particular, are expected to express their national sentiments and was very open about his reluctance to continue living in Palestine. At the same time, his active participation in civil society had made him very reflective regarding refugeeness and the camp community, and he was always eager to get involved even though this caused him

frustration every now and then. My conversations with him were extremely fruitful precisely because of his analytical and critical stances, which made it possible to reflect on the notions and situations I encountered during the fieldwork.

In Jordan, the two individuals I relied on most were Karim and Amal, both from Jerash/Gaza camp. At the time of the fieldwork, Karim was in his early twenties, and though he did not have a high level of formal education he had been able to establish himself as a freelance photographer and project manager thanks to the contacts he had. He had already moved out from his family home and was living by himself in Amman. In contrast, Amal was 26 and could only dream of the type of freedom Karim enjoyed. She lived with her family in the camp and, being unmarried and unemployed, mainly stayed at home, feeling stuck in her situation. As well as the encounters with these two Palestinian refugees, in Jordan I had the privilege of learning about Jordanian society from my (non-Palestinian) flatmate, who was always ready to answer my questions, and very capably so, on the position of different refugee communities in Jordan.

That all my key interlocutors were in their late teens or their twenties and most of them were highly educated, and thus from relatively well-off families in the camp context, is not a coincidence but is due to a number of factors that shaped my fieldwork experiences. First, my own positionality placed me within their cohort. Though I was in my late twenties at the time of the fieldwork, I was usually thought to be considerably younger, and hence it became natural to spend time with younger people, some of whom were almost ten years my junior. Socially, as well, I was their peer: unmarried, without children, and still at university. Furthermore, similarly to the unemployed (Rabinow 1977: 34), students had a surplus of spare time that those who had fulltime jobs and families to take care of did not, which provided me with the opening to fit into their everyday schedules. This initially unintentional concentration on university students also meant that the majority, though not all, of my close interlocutors were from families who could afford to pay university tuition fees. This does not necessarily make them middle class in the wider context of the host societies, but on the economic spectrum of the camp dwellers they were in fact such, as they were not from the poorest segment of residents. This naturally affected the aspirations that emerged among my interlocutors, as they were in a position in which seeking a university education, among other things, was possible, or even something that was expected of them.

Yet, also from the perspective of the main research question, the young adults were the group I was most interested in. Engaged with their studies and unmarried, they were still in the process of establishing their adult lives, which made

considerations on the future more relevant to them than to those, let's say, in their forties or fifties. As Marc Augé has noted, "expectation, hope, impatience, desire and fear, none are the same at different ages in life" (Augé 2014: 19), and young adults are likely to experience these feelings intensely, as they feel pressure to achieve more in their lives (see Schielke 2015: 23). Though the future always remains volatile, especially in the precarious conditions that Palestinian refugees occupy, it nevertheless appears differently at different life stages and its immediacy is heightened when one is expected to take the step from one life stage to another or make decisions with lifelong consequences, which was the case with those in their twenties. Youths and young adults not only make up the largest segment of the population in the Middle East but they are also faced with high rates of unemployment (UNDP 2016), which comprehensively affects their prospects in life. The young adults were in a position that demanded the negotiation of different options and expectations: what to do after graduation, when and to whom to get married, and how to secure the basis for an adult life. These decisions that would transition them from their youth to being respectable adults were overshadowed by the present conditions that compromised their possibilities of achieving the desired life, as I will elaborate throughout this dissertation.

In addition to my interlocutors' actual encounters with me, the timings of my fieldwork also affected them profoundly. By this I mean not only the order in which the fieldsites were accessed, which of course was relevant, but the actual historical moment in which the fieldwork took place. At the end of 2015, when I was doing fieldwork in Lebanon, a series of knife attacks was taking place in the West Bank, dubbed by some as *intifadat as-sukkineh* (the knife uprising) or *intifadat al-Quds* (the Jerusalem uprising). These events were also closely followed in exile, and many of my interlocutors referred to them in our discussions. When I traveled to the West Bank the following spring, the situation had already subsided, but the lethal Israeli response to the attacks and to the demonstrations that followed was still fresh in people's memory. There, the views on the events were also rather different than those I encountered in Lebanon, due to the concrete effects of these happenings on my interlocutors' lives.

Another important temporal contextualization is the Syrian civil war, which has shaken the region since 2011. Its effect has been felt especially in Lebanon, where there is a constant fear of the conflict spilling over onto the Lebanese side of the border. This small country also houses the highest number of Syrian refugees per capita, the presence of whom has had tangible consequences for the Palestinians in the country. The same is also true in Jordan, though to a slightly lesser extent. There,

it was the country's weak economic situation, and the new income tax laws approved at the end of 2018 among other measures, that had created tensions in the society at the time this research was being conducted.

Research methods and materials

Ethnographic material forms the basis of this work, but during my time in the fields I also conducted 45 formal interviews, the majority with Palestinian refugees but also a number with people working with them. When the interviews were conducted in Arabic, I had someone interpreting for me. Though my Arabic skills improved during the course of the fieldwork, they were not, and still are not, on a level that would have allowed me to manage the interviews by myself. Hence, the people I ended up spending more time with had at least some level of proficiency in English, which, of course, also tells of their level of education. In Lebanon it was my field assistant who interpreted for me during the interviews but in the West Bank and Jordan the role was taken by existing interlocutors, usually those who had made the connections for me. The formal interviews were recorded or, if the person preferred it, detailed notes were taken. The interviews were open-ended and, though I had themes I hoped to cover, the conversations usually evolved naturally with the interviewee(s) leading us onto the topics that ended up being those most discussed. Additionally, and more central to the evolvement of my understanding, I had countless discussions with my interlocutors on themes related to my research. Furthermore, living within the refugee community, in the case of Lebanon and the West Bank, enabled me to observe mundane practices that reflected refugees' attitudes toward their futures. I have also been able to follow the lives of my interlocutors subsequent to the fieldwork. I have followed their social media updates, exchanged messages in Messenger and WhatsApp, and visited them again when I have traveled back to the fields for shorter visits.

In addition to the ethnographic fieldwork, this dissertation draws from an abundance of other types of material: historical documents, published surveys, case reports, news stories, position papers and working papers, and, naturally, from the vast literature, academic and non-academic, on Palestine. As Edward Said (1993: 4) has pointed out,

> [a]t this point, no one writing about Palestine – and indeed, no one going to Palestine – starts from scratch: We have all been there before, whether by reading about it, experiencing its millennial presence and power, or actually

living there for periods of time. It is a terribly crowded place, almost too crowded for what it is asked to bear by way of history or interpretation of history.

The abundance of scholarly, biographic, journalistic, and activist-produced works on Palestine and Palestinians renders it practically impossible to approach the field without an a priori conception of what there is to encounter.

Furthermore, it is clear that many Palestinians are rather accustomed to encounters with researchers and journalists, through either having previous personal experience or at least being familiar with models of such situations, and many are thus ready to narrate their stories and positions in a well-articulated manner. This was evident especially with political representatives of the camps and with organizations working with refugees. It was also clear that for some I was a vehicle for getting a message across, either a political message or one concerning the specific socio-legal position a certain refugee faced. Sometimes I was explicitly told to write about certain themes, such as the situation of non-registered Palestinian refugees in Lebanon or drug use in the camps. For some I was also a potential *wasta*, a connection that could in the future provide help of some sort. Edward Said's words thus also ring true for those involved in this research: Palestinian refugees "are not just the people seen or looked at […] [they] are also looking at […][their] observers", they also "are scrutinizing, asserting, judging" (Said 1993: 166), and they are actively defining how they want their story to be told to the world.

2.2   Ethics in ethnographic research

Heidi Armbruster has argued that "in anthropology the questions and loci of ethics have followed on the heels of questions and loci of power and its changing theoretical framings" (Armbruster 2008: 4). She asks what it implies about research done with those whose rights to dignity and respect are compromised when we take respect for others as an important moral value (ibid.). What is asked and looked at, and why? These are questions that resonate with my own experiences of doing fieldwork in Palestinian refugee camps. As for many anthropologists (Armbruster 2008: 12), for me the ethical engagement in the field is closely intertwined with the political. My interest in doing research in Palestinian refugee camps emerged from political activism that had brought me into contact with Palestinian refugees, which in turn inspired me to learn more about their situation from an academic perspective. Before I started to consider Palestine academically, I had been active in a leftist youth

organization, which enabled me to visit the West Bank for the first time in 2008. Since then, I had participated in and organized solidarity activities in Finland, made school visits to explain the realities of the occupation, and written popular articles on the situation in the West Bank and that of Palestinian refugees in Lebanon. Though being different types of encounter, this long-term engagement with 'the Palestinian question' helped me to gain trust in the field, as it made my own standpoint evident to those with whom I talked.

It is in these encounters in the field that questions about ethics arise, as research ethics are always located within relations: how one encounters people, how one is encountered as a researcher, and how these encounters and their outcomes can affect the relations that exist in the field and beyond. In anthropology there has been an interest in ethics and morality at least since the 1960s and 70s, when questions about anthropology's complicity with colonialism, anthropologists' accountability to those they worked with – both students and interlocutors – and the politics of knowledge and impartiality were among the discussed topics (Asad 1973; Barnes 1963; Berreman 1982). More recent literature discusses both how it is possible to conduct ethnography in an ethically sound manner (e.g. Caplan 2003) and how morals are articulated in different historical and cultural settings (e.g. Fassin 2012; Zigon 2007).

In these times of audit culture (see Strathern 2000), research ethics can nevertheless be easily reduced to a discussion on consent, anonymization and other codes of conduct that studies should abide by in the different phases of the research process. Universities have their guidelines on research ethics along with boards and committees that evaluate the ethical implications of the work their staff is doing[7], and discipline-specific ethics guidelines are negotiated by academic associations to provide the basic frame for doing ethically accountable research in a given field, the American Anthropological Association having the most established ethics code in anthropology. Here also, as a matter of course, I abide by these general rules and, to protect the privacy of my interlocutors, I do not use their real names when writing about them. I chose to systematically anonymize everyone I refer to in this dissertation, even those who said they did not mind whether I used their real name or an invented one, in order to be consistent in the anonymization. In some sections I refer to people by means other than their anonymized names, if the level of information given on a specific theme would in itself make them recognizable. I chose to adopt this conduct especially with those themes that I considered to be more sensitive. For the same reason, I do not always disclose the home camp or gathering or other biographical details if I feel that by doing so I might compromise someone's anonymity.

This rather mechanical application of anonymization is, however, only a fraction of the ethical considerations one engages with in a research process. The general rules on informed consent and avoiding harm provide a minimum requirement and a good starting point, but what they actually mean is always context-specific and open to debate. Furthermore, as Pat Caplan (2003) reminds us, conducting ethical research goes beyond ticking the boxes in lists of ethics guidelines. Rather, it should be much more of an integral part of the epistemic processes, and she notes that the ethics of anthropology

> goes to the heart of the discipline: the premises on which its practitioners operate, its epistemology, theory and praxis. In other words, what is anthropology for? Who is it for? Do its ethics need to be rethought each generation, as the discipline's conditions of existence change? Are there different ethics for different contexts? (Caplan 2003: 3)

These are questions that do not have simple and unambiguous answers, yet they are also the fundamental premises that direct anthropological knowledge production, from selecting a research topic and field all the way to writing and to engaging with students and wider society.

The importance of ethical contemplation is especially heightened when working in contexts of conflict or with people in vulnerable positions, as this research does and anthropologists, generally, often do. Didier Fassin (2008: 337–338) has noted that moral concern and moral indignation have become a major guiding principle in choosing research topics among anthropologists, resulting in

> a significant proportion of contemporary anthropological studies deal[ing] with inequalities and violence, refugee camps and military conflicts, human rights and sustainable development, ethnic groups in danger and social resistance to domination. (ibid.)

This emphasis means that the so-called vulnerable communities are the people among whom anthropologists frequently conduct their fieldwork, and that the research's knowledge-constitutive interest is often driven by emancipatory ideals. It also presupposes certain answers to the questions posed by Caplan, ones that emphasize siding with the vulnerable and oppressed. Working with and among the vulnerable, however, by definition connotes a stark power inequality between the researcher and the researched, which means that there is a need for careful ethical contemplation. The ways in which the power relations manifest are always context-specific, and even within my three fields they took different forms, which necessitated slightly differing contemplations from me not only as a researcher but

also as a human being whose path briefly crossed with those of the people at the center of this research.

In addition to ensuring that people's lives are not endangered in any way, neither physically nor socially, it can be debated whether researchers have further responsibilities for individuals, such as raising awareness and trying to affect the political processes that could improve their living situations. These questions are central when working among Palestinians, whose rights and dignity are under attack, and have been for decades. Speaking out is not necessarily about taking sides – though in some cases even that might be required as a humane response to certain situations – but it does mean voicing truthfully and respectfully the lived reality that unfolds in the fields, which is a principle I have aimed to abide by in this research. It is also clear that the ethical responsibility for speaking out is closely tied to politics and power; the highly politicized nature of the situation in Israel/Palestine is evident in the starkly differing, and divisive, narratives on history and present, and the very being of a refugee is in the middle of these conflicting, and even violating, ways of telling. Remaining silent on the injustices present in the field supports the status quo – in this case these injustices include the settler colonial system of exclusion and the oppressive apartheid policies (see Tilley 2012) – and is potentially not only political but also unethical toward the people who have been part of the research and shared their stories.

Furthermore, in my experience Palestinian refugees are extremely interested in how outsiders see both their situation and the question of Palestine in general. I was asked repeatedly about my stances, as well as about how people in my home country saw Palestine and Palestinians. These questions were vocalized especially in Lebanon and Jordan, whereas in the West Bank my presence in and of itself indicated solidarity. There was, however, a difference in the tone in which these questions were asked. In Lebanon, people seemed to be curious about how much people knew about the conditions they lived in and they wanted to know how I as an outsider saw something that was part of who they were. When I expressed that I was hesitant to answer the question about how I thought the situation in Palestine should be resolved, saying that I felt it should be determined not by outsiders but by Palestinians themselves, my answer was not accepted and I was instead encouraged to give my own opinion. In Jordan, on the other hand, it sometimes felt like I was being tested on my views and that based on my answers people would determine whether I was to be considered an ally, and thus worthy of their trust.

I consider that truthfully answering these questions about political stances is not only a proper way of acting but also part of research ethics. In this case, it also helped

me to get closer to people, as my position reassured my interlocutors of my good intentions. Furthermore, on the level of human interaction, to expect people to share their views with you as a researcher there should be a willingness to return the favor when asked to do so. Though it is equally important not to overdo self-reflection by letting it overshadow anthropology's main concern, that of "knowing otherness" (Hage 2009a), or to create an illusion that the research situation could be reciprocal, ethnographic encounters are always between human beings, and they could not function if there was no proper two-sided interaction. Sharing something of oneself is needed in creating a bond, and expressing opinions should not be seen as compromising impartiality but rather as making visible the stances that, in any case, are there.

On the practical side of conducting this particular research, the mere choice of making multi-sited ethnography introduces a set of ethical questions that do not necessarily emerge in more traditional, single-site ethnography. Doing multi-sited ethnography can be challenging for many reasons. Even when one is not tied to a tight schedule and to fields that are geographically wide apart (cf. Hage 2005), engaging with multiple fields can be exhausting. When one is working in only one field, there is more time to get into the community, earn people's trust and generally live and learn in that site. When there is the same timetable but three different fields, some of the depth that can be achieved only with time is inevitably lost. At a minimum, one cannot expect all the fields to be encountered with equal depth. Still, in multi-sited fieldwork all the fields must be covered in a way that does them justice in order to produce ethical and academically rigorous research. One must prepare oneself more carefully, and be precise in what one is doing, as there is not as much time to learn the basics in the field or to 'go with the flow'. All this considered, multi-sited ethnography can also benefit research by bringing a more comprehensive focus to studies that deal with geographically scattered yet connected people and phenomena, as suggested above. But as methodological choices are part and parcel of how research ethics become part of research practices, I consider it important to raise this theme here.

For me, the most challenging ethical issue is related to ethnographic methodology, to which I was probably not that attuned as a newcomer to anthropology, having done both my bachelor's and master's degrees in sociology. Though working from the bottom up, by always taking the actual encounters in the fields as the starting point, gives precedence to the 'voice of the other', the same process that enables 'the voice' to be heard can generate complex ethical questions. I consider that the contradiction embedded in the ethnographic approach is that its

greatest strength is what creates its most pressing ethical challenges, namely the closeness of relations that evolve during the time spent in the field. Anthropologists take pride in the close relations they are able to create (see Hannerz 2003: 208–209), and at times we and those we interact with can come to see them as friendships. Labeling a relation as a friendship indicates a degree of closeness, a longstanding interaction that provides the kind of access to the thickness of the everyday and of culture that is much valued in anthropology. Talking about friendships can, however, also hide the inherent power relation that exists between the researcher and the researched, no matter how sincere and accurate the label might be. The researcher is, in the end, the one who holds the epistemic power to define, the one who comes and goes, and the one who benefits from the goodwill and trust of those they interact with in, to put it bluntly, building their academic career.

Furthermore, when friendships do emerge during fieldwork, careful ethical consideration is required from the ethnographer. As the thickness of ethnography relies on everyday interaction in informal settings and on the trust we are able to build with people we meet, the question becomes how to ensure that we are worthy of that trust? How to differentiate between the roles we come to occupy, and at the same time excel in providing an insightful ethnographic depiction that is most likely enhanced by the stories entrusted to us? For example, should those who sees us as friends be constantly aware that we are present in the field first and foremost as ethnographers? Should it be their responsibility to indicate when they are telling us about their lives strictly as a friend, and not as an interlocutor whose words can be later quoted or referred to? Can we even assume that the people we interact with are constantly aware of our presence as a researcher and actually understand what it means to do ethnographic research? It is clear that the answer is no, and because it is not possible in every situation to go back and check this with those involved, it is left to the ethnographer's moral responsibility to contemplate which situations can be narrated in ethnographic descriptions, and which should be left unmentioned, even when they might provide interesting insight from an academic perspective. Of course, this does not mean that such moments would not inform understanding, and it is, in fact, this understanding that helps the researcher to determine what to explicitly include and what to take as tacit knowledge. It should, nevertheless, be the researcher's responsibility to be aware of the challenges created by the methodology itself and be sensitive to the different roles we come to occupy among the people with whom we dwell.

3   Theoretical framing: hermeneutic spatiotemporalities

In this chapter, I will turn to consider the theoretical discussions that are central to this ethnographic study. The theoretical discussion that has structured this dissertation most comprehensively is that of the hermeneutical approach to both understanding and temporality. The relational spatial processes and presuppositions that define the multi-sited approach resonate with hermeneutics in that it is the movement between the loci – spatial, temporal, or epistemological – that is central to knowledge production. Furthermore, as I will discuss in more detail shortly, anthropology, by definition, can be considered a hermeneutic endeavor that aims to increase the understanding of otherness. Hermeneutics of temporality, on the other hand, draws attention to the intertwined nature of the past, present, and future, which highlights the importance of understanding the histories when contemplating the present and, especially, the future. Anthropology of the future, to which I more specifically anchor this research, provides a route map for grasping this opaque temporality anthropologically. Finally, I will introduce the relevant approaches to space that pave the way to the themes discussed in the ethnographic parts of this dissertation.

3.1   Hermeneutics in time and space

One of the key epistemological aims of contemporary anthropology is without a doubt to strive for a deep understanding. Anthropologists observe a wide array of social and cultural phenomena in order to understand how people act, why they act the way they do, how they define and give meaning to their being and to the actions they take, and how they make sense of the world they act in. A way to approach, and partially reach this understanding, is to engage in fieldwork, to immerse oneself within the life-worlds of those whose societies and/or cultures have aspects about which we hope to learn more. By spending time in the community that is under anthropological scrutiny, the researcher is expected to gradually learn to understand processes that were previously foreign and maybe even incomprehensible to them.

And thus, in my view, the way in which a given fieldwork proceeds is an inherently hermeneutic process. While in some ways critical of the hermeneutic approach, Michael Agar (1980) has noted that hermeneutic philosophy fits neatly with the concerns that ethnographers have always stressed in their work. Historically, hermeneutics was developed in order to interpret scripture and historical source material, and in anthropology it has been appropriated for textual interpretations on the social (see Geertz 1973; also Jackson 1987). But what is of concern in this research are not its textual applications but its more recent developments in the social sciences, history, and ontology. In these fields, hermeneutics aims to understand what is distant in time and culture (Shapiro & Sica 1984: 4); it is a philosophical theory and method that ascertains the nature, character, conditions, and limits of understanding (Keane & Lawn 2016: 1). It is not, however, merely about scientific inquiries on interpretation and understanding but part of humans' experience of the world in general (Gadamer 2013: xx). Here, the hermeneutic approach is a philosophical undercurrent that helps in making sense of people's ways of negotiating their being by bringing attention to their temporal and spatial situatedness.

Before getting into the details of the spatiotemporalities of Palestinian refugee communities, I delineate the theoretical discussions on the hermeneutic approach and its connection to the ethnographic method, in order to introduce the ontological basis for adopting it as a structuring premise. There is always uneasiness in adopting Western philosophical discussions in anthropological inquiries (see Das, Jackson, Kleinman, & Singh 2014), but what makes it rather easy to bridge from hermeneutics to anthropology is its inherent openness to ways of being. German philosophers Heidegger and Gadamer, the latter being the student of the former and greatly influenced by his work, are central to the development of contemporary, philosophical hermeneutics, as they gave it the ontological turn that redirected the attention of hermeneutic understanding to being in general, rather than its being seen only as a method to be applied in scientific inquiries.

The similarities between ethnography and hermeneutics start from here, in that neither of them is a method in the strictest sense of their being able to reach exact knowledge by following a preset path; rather, they lay us open to, in theory, an infinitely continuing circle of understanding that predisposes us to ways of being. Ethnographic knowledge is always mediated through the ethnographer, and their cultural and historical situatedness, which structures the understanding of the world of others. Similarly, contemporary hermeneutics, following Heidegger and Gadamer, stresses that understanding is always affected and shaped by the historical position

and tradition of the interpreter. Heidegger calls these preunderstandings a *fore-structure*, and this cannot be escaped because it is an existential part of being itself and is, thus, a condition of possibility for thinking one's being in the world. This fore-structure is an outcome of the historicity of being, of thrownness to a place and time that structures our existence and thus also understanding. The fore-structure is, in fact, essential for understanding as, according to Heidegger, "[e]very interpretation which is to contribute some understanding must already have understood what is to be interpreted" (Heidegger 1996: 142) and the question is thus not how to escape the circle that holds these preunderstandings, which has been the aim of more classical forms of hermeneutics, but "how to get in it in the right way" (Heidegger 1996: 143).

Gadamer follows his mentor in stressing the impossibility of overcoming the preunderstandings embedded in the tradition people belong to as historical and finite beings. Instead of fore-structure, Gadamer speaks of *prejudices*, and calls for the abandonment of *the prejudice against prejudice* (Gadamer 2013: 283) that has been prevalent in European thought since the Enlightenment. Nevertheless, Gadamer's insistence on rehabilitating prejudice does not denote uncritically accepting what is passed on to us as prejudices by tradition, but rather "do[es] justice to man's finite, historical mode of being" (Gadamer 2013: 289). It is the task of hermeneutics to determine which prejudices should be validated as productive preconditions for understanding and which abandoned as being misdirecting. What is of importance in this process is that people are always within a tradition and cannot thus completely reach understanding outside the notions that the tradition has passed on to them. It should also be highlighted that this embeddedness in a tradition concerns not only knowledge-production but being itself, and hence fore-structures and prejudices are part of everyday negotiations about how lives are lived. While in the Palestinian context the words tradition and heritage usually connote the pre-exile customs that are often appropriated for political purposes, here the terms are not used with this cultural meaning but rather describe the ontological condition of being that reveals the thrownness to a pre-existing historically and spatially bound world.

The embeddedness in tradition (that can be conceptualized as culture, community, society, or any other formation of the human's being that exists in a specific historical moment), is something that should be easy for an anthropologist to accept. In a very hermeneutic manner, Michael Jackson has noted that "there is no ahistorical, absolute, non-finite reality *either outside or within us* that we can reach by adopting a particular discursive style" (Jackson 1987: 17, italics in original). In his later work, he further describes that his own take on the ethnographic method can

be seen as a hermeneutic circle encompassing intellectual movement between the three horizons of one's own world, the society one hopes to understand, and humanity as a whole (Jackson 2010: 49–50). In the hermeneutic approach, understanding becomes possible in a process that Gadamer calls the *fusion of horizons*, which ties together the horizon of the present, itself a product of the continuous testing of prejudices by encountering the past and understanding the tradition one is always within, with historical horizons that are at the heart of the inquiry (Gadamer 2013: 317). It is specifically the notion of horizontality that highlights the spatial dimension of Gadamer's hermeneutics, as the "horizons change for a person who is moving" (Gadamer 2013: 315). In a more mundane and grounded sense, the horizons, in other words the location in a tradition, are thus also part of the ways in which people understand their possibilities, and here it is clear that movement can be a way of broadening them: the motivation for emigrating is often the hope of finding new possibilities in the horizons produced by different historical processes.

Though Gadamer discusses specifically how it is possible, through a hermeneutic process, to reach an understanding of history, it has been suggested that similar merging can be pursued not only temporally but spatially (see Marcus & Fischer 1999: 31). Not only can hermeneutics bring together temporally separate, historical epochs with their own horizons of understanding, but also spatially separate horizons that are the differing understandings held in different cultural positionalities. Understood from this perspective, Gadamerian historical hermeneutics can be applied in anthropology as "cultural hermeneutics" that opens the interpretive horizons of an ethnographic process, which is "an intersubjective and hence inherently hermeneutic praxis" (Fabian 2014: xix). Gadamer has himself also stressed hermeneutics as a moral phenomenon that aims to understand the other (Gadamer 2013: 366), an anthropological project par excellence.

What further ties the two approaches together is that the ethnographic process implies the type of openness that is also characteristic of the practice of hermeneutics. In an untranslated work, Gadamer specifies that

> [h]ermeneutic philosophy does not conceive of itself as an "absolute" position, but as a way of experience. It insists on the fact that there is no higher principle than to keep oneself open to dialogue. This however always implies to acknowledge in advance the possible right, if not the superiority of the interlocutor" (Gadamer 1986: 505, quoted in Schwarz Wentzer 2016: 193).

When engaging in ethnography, we always go into the field with presumptions, or prejudices as Gadamer calls them, but simultaneously the ethnographer needs to

"embrace" the field and not remain attached to pre-defined ideas about what is important and meaningful. Nevertheless, one can never escape these prejudices as they are also a precondition for understanding. Without them, one would be unable to make sense of the world or to ask questions in the first place. Yet what is stressed in both ethnography and hermeneutics is that the gained knowledge should be an outcome of an evolving process of understanding that includes abandoning and reconfiguring prior notions – moving toward the other in an open way. Therefore, the preconditions of understanding are not only limiting but always entail the possibility of understanding differently, of being open to ways of being and of comprehending the world.

In this research, the hermeneutic nature of ethnographic fieldwork was amplified by the multi-sited nature of the research process, which as a methodology highlights the relational nature of knowledge production and spatiality. The multiple fieldsites required me to engage with each site separately by acknowledging their unique histories and differing sociopolitical realities, while at the same time keeping them in the same circle of understanding. Lebanon, which was the first place I did fieldwork, was in this sense also the most formative site, as the experience I gained there redirected and sharpened the focus of the whole research. Even though each field visit was an experience of its own, the previous ones always informed and directed those that followed. As mentioned in the introduction, this research started with a specific interest in the understandings of future in relation to the right of return. Yet, during the preliminary field visits I encountered a reality that manifested a multiplicity of futures that in their everydayness were not reducible to the political project of the return, which in practice is too uncertain in its realization to meet the pressing needs of the everyday. Thus, refugees have to find different answers in their present when they project toward the future to address the limitations experienced in the different spaces of refuge, and this process of projecting toward the future, which is itself a hermeneutical way of approaching human existence, became the main focus of the research.

Past and future in the present

The appeal of hermeneutics for the aims of this research is based not solely on its close resemblance to the ethnographic process, but also, and rather more importantly, on the ontological hermeneutics and the understanding of temporality embedded in it. This approach is present in Gadamer's philosophy, but especially so

in Heidegger's early work. This specific way of temporalizing being constitutes the motivation for the structuring of this dissertation. Among my interlocutors, present situations were explained and clarified by drawing from past experiences, and their uncertain futures lingered over the present. These different temporalities usually had a clear spatial dimension, and it was through these spatialities that the past, present, and future emerged; this directed me toward approaching spatiality and temporality as intertwined, but without adopting the Kantian a priori assumptions about time and space as fixed pre-conditions of understanding. Rather than being chronological time, which comprises events that follow one another on a linear timeline, experienced time, though including elements of the former, is a more complex fabric in which different temporalities, both personal and societal, are intertwined. The Heideggerian alternative to chronological time resonates with this complexity, as it sidelines the centrality of the present and brings to the fore mainly the future but also the past in the temporal structuring of being (Heidegger 1996: 17). It is the constant movement between different temporalities that is integral to perceiving temporality in everyday encounters.

For my interlocutors, the past was appropriated by the present as the past of Palestine, of the homeland, where their lands and rights were, but it was also the past of the exile, the histories that had unfolded in the camps and that were constantly present in the landscapes in which the Palestinian refugees dwelt. Present was defined by the spaces of the host sovereigns, by the socio-spatial relations that reflected the political condition in each field. Future, on the other hand, reflected the hopes, the return to Palestine, the improvement of the situation under the host sovereign, or, in many cases, a new personal start somewhere else.

The centrality of past in the context of Palestinian refugees is amplified because the injustices of the past have never been resolved. Edward Said describes this relation of the present claims for a more just future to the injustices of the past when he writes that

> the past for all us Arabs is so discredited as to be lost, or damned, or thought about exclusively in contrast to the present and not too credible projection of the future. […] the legitimacy of the future is built almost solely on the illegitimacy of the past – that seemingly limitless series of failures, invasions, conspiracies, destructions, and betrayals. (Said 1993: 70)

These political narratives and demands build on the past by projecting it into the future, but so does the everyday, as people always carry the history with them in "a sense that I, as a latecomer, am following something that preceded me" (Kisiel 1995:

128). The past forms our *heritage*, or *tradition* as Gadamer calls it, and it is something that people share with their community and that directs the "possible projects" (Polt 1999: 101), though it does not determine them. As Gadamer himself has noted, and as Richard Polt reminds us in relation to Heidegger's notion of *heritage* (Polt 1999: 101), recognizing our embeddedness in the past does not mean that people are determined by it nor does it make them conservatives; rather, it acknowledges that "we always produce it [tradition] ourselves inasmuch as we understand, participate in the evolution of tradition, and hence further determine it ourselves" (Gadamer 2013: 305). People thus always add layers to that which preceded them, and though never free to act in the sense that it would be possible to escape the conditions produced by the historical positions, people can, within the conditions that frame the everyday, make choices that redefine tradition for the coming generations.

However, in the Palestinian context, and also in the Middle East more generally, it should be remembered that the ones negotiating the ways of being are not primarily the free-standing individuals of Western thought, simply because the individual is not the primary subject through which being and self are comprehended. Rather, as Suad Joseph and Susan Slyomovics (2000) suggest, in the Middle Eastern context individuals are "encouraged to view themselves as always linked with, reciprocally shaped by, and mutually responsive to family and relatives" (Joseph & Slyomovics 2000: 6–7). This does not mean that individuals do not negotiate themselves also in individualistic terms, but simply that family and kin are at the center of a person's – and a community's – being in such a comprehensive manner that Western individualism is often unable to be accommodated. Suad Joseph has called this process, in which individuals are socialized in social systems "that value linkage, bonding, and sociability", relational selving (Joseph 1999: 9), and it is within this system that modes of being within a tradition are negotiated.

From an anthropological perspective, it is self-evident that tradition(s) mold(s) people's being, but ontological hermeneutics helps in bringing attention also to the role that the future plays in it. The present is, in the Heideggerian way of approaching temporality, always a reflection of the past, of *the having-been*, but it is also tied to the future as "the world opens up only thanks to the past and the future" (Polt 1999: 97). The present thus loses its oft-assumed precedence in the temporal structuring of what Heidegger calls authentic being. Even when thinking of the everyday, the present discloses itself as the fleeting moment in which people are often already directed toward what is to come. Present is, nevertheless, the only way to grasp the future which, by definition, can never be attained. To approach the future anthropologically is thus possible only through the present, and in order to do so

one must acknowledge that in the present people are already directed toward the forthcoming. Charles Guignon summarizes future-oriented temporal hermeneutics by noting that "human existence itself is an ongoing event given meaning by anticipations of where it is all going to come out 'in the end', anticipations which are constantly being revised in the light of developments along the way" (Guignon 2016: 138) and that "we are motivated to act by our futural anticipations and expectations" which again "make it possible for the past to emerge-into-presence as having significance as promising, obscuring, or challenging" (Guignon 2016: 141). In other words, in planning for the future the past is drawn upon to evaluate what is to be expected, what is achievable, and how it would be possible to amend the conditions that open up to us in the everyday.

Palestinian writer Fawaz Turki has proposed that "[c]ommunities in struggle feel habitual comfort only in the future tense, finding the strength to overcome extinction in their shared perception of 'potentiality', of the inevitable succession of what they have mapped ahead" (Turki 1988: 174). Yet, and maybe more central from the contemporary standpoint, it is specifically the experienced precariousness and vulnerability of the Palestinian refugee existence that further forces the refugees to project toward the future, as the uncertainties of the everyday do not afford them the luxury of not planning ahead. The anxiety (in its Heideggerian sense, see Joronen 2021) experienced in the everyday circumstances compels Palestinians to face the finiteness of their being and give precedence to the future. Faced with the extreme lack of options that characterizes life, especially in Lebanon, Palestinians are forced to make decisions that can ultimately widen their horizons, but which could also – as those taking the actions are fully aware – lead to the other extreme, to the immediate confluence with their mortality. Acknowledging the limitations in ways of being and acting, Edward Said ponders the possibilities with which Palestinians are confronted. Though written a quarter of a century ago, the sentiments expressed by Said are still relevant, and may be even more apt and pressing now than at the time of their writing:

> For, having had the experience of limits, we are thrown back on ourselves in this period of political indecisiveness and forced to raise the issue of whether we have learned what it is that has brought us this fate (perhaps *not* the worst in history), whether there is anything we can do to change it, and whether, based on the realities of our past, we can responsibly articulate a sense of the future to which all of us can adhere and aspire. (Said 1993: 159)

3.2   Anthropology of the future

I have now delineated the philosophical hermeneutic approach on the temporality of the human being, yet the question remains of how to grasp the future in anthropological research that is conducted ethnographically. At the beginning of this century, Liisa Malkki (2001: 372) connected the relative lack of attention anthropologists have given to the future as a topic of inquiry with the common understanding of the term history, and the priority it has gained as a more real temporality compared with more open and unpredictable future. We cannot say anything for certain about the future, unlike with the past that has already happened, and the present that we witness around us, both of which are thought to be more accessible in ethnographic encounters, and thus anthropologists have traditionally steered away from the uncertain and opaque future tense.

Arjun Appadurai has further explained the absence – or at least the lack of explicit inclusion – of the future by anthropology's preoccupation with a specific understanding of culture. In anthropology, culture has traditionally been construed through pastness, conceptualized as habits, customs, heritage, and tradition (Appadurai 2004: 60). Consequently, Appadurai notes that the future is for the economist to contemplate, whereas anthropologists concern themselves with the human as a cultural actor who is by default "a person of and from the past" (ibid.). To overcome this tendency to ignore the future tense in anthropological discussions, Appadurai proposes redefining the future as a cultural fact (Appadurai 2013). After recognizing that anthropologists have, in fact, implicitly dealt with the future all along, as most approaches to culture "smuggle it in" with their preoccupation with norms, beliefs, and values, Appadurai (2004) introduces the capacity to aspire as a cultural capacity that directs our attention toward the future.

More recently, Nauja Kleist and Stef Jansen (2016) have observed that the question of the future and its place in the present has, over the past two decades, also started to intrigue researchers in the social sciences and humanities. They connect this increased interest to the fascination with the different manifestations of hope that has proliferated and has come to occupy the thoughts of many academics since the turn of the millennium. Unlike the economic and futurologist approach, anthropology of the future does not concern itself with predictions of what is to come but rather focuses attention on how the future is always present and is encountered by people in their everyday lives, when they think through aspirations, hopes, fears, and plans. Liisa Malkki (2001: 328) further notes that both the future and the past are "imaginative constructions built out of people's perceived realities"

– very much, I argue, mirroring the hermeneutic understanding of human temporality – that are "constrained and shaped by lived experience that must be taken into account". It is precisely this intertwined nature of different temporalities that opens the door to contemplating the future through ethnographic engagement.

Hence, it is through the present that we can grasp how the forthcoming and the past manifest themselves in a given ethnographic context. The interplay, and relationality, of the temporalities, approached by Eric Hirsch and Charles Stewart (2005: 262) through the concept of historicity, "describes a human situation in flow, where versions of the past and future (of persons, collectives or things) assume present form in relation to events, political needs, available cultural forms and emotional dispositions". They continue that "[t]o understand historicity in any particular ethnographic context […] is to know the relevant ways in which (social) pasts and futures are implicated in present circumstances" (2005: 262–263).

Hirsch and Stewart explicitly connect their account of historicity with Heidegger's and Gadamer's hermeneutics. Yet, even in anthropological contemplations that do not make the connection, the relational temporality is implicit because the future that manifests in the present is linked to the positions produced by the cultural, societal, and personal pasts. Hoping and aspiring should thus not be seen as boundless ventures with infinite horizons, because it is their positionality and placing in a certain tradition that has an effect on what is seen as possible, desirable, meaningful, and achievable. Ghassan Hage's writings on hope (2003a) and waiting (2009b) explore precisely their unequal distribution, and Arjun Appadurai's (2013) explorations on the capacity to aspire recognize the different possibilities the poor and the rich elite have to practice this capacity and thus engage it efficiently. Though both of these accounts are more akin to Marxist conceptions of distribution of wealth and capital – or Bourdieu's more specific take on social and cultural capital – than to the hermeneutic tradition, on a temporal level they anchor the present conditions to positions, and traditions, that are historically produced. Both Hage and Appadurai explicitly acknowledge that the future takes its leads from the past.

The most studied temporality in the case of Palestinian refugees is undoubtedly the past and its different manifestations and appropriations in the present. History, memory, personal recollections, and traditions have dominated both in academic literature and in Palestinians' own national narratives, and demand a just future by referring to the injustices of the past. Furthermore, in a rather simplified reading, the national narratives expect Palestinian refugees to live both with the memory of the past and for the future that will be built upon the return to Palestine. Present is simply a state of waiting, the temporary existence of the refugee camps. For Hirsch

and Stewart, it is also the past and its multiple versions and uses that is the locus of interest, yet it is always inherently tied to other temporal modalities and cannot be read as a realm of its own. This mirrors Gadamer's hermeneutics: history is always viewed and interpreted from the vantage point of the contemporary, and it cannot be otherwise. Though my own interests lie in the imaginations of the future, the same interconnectedness remains: from an anthropological perspective the future can be scrutinized only when brought together with the past and present. Furthermore, even when my interlocutors do not explicitly draw from past experiences when contemplating their desirable futures, the past is still there as the pre-understanding that has molded their perspectives on their possibilities, which in the end forms the basis on which plans are made and possible futures imagined.

Future in hoping and waiting

In anthropological explorations it is what we anticipate in our everyday actions that reveals the future in the present (cf. present future, Luhmann 1976: 140–143). This revelation can be approached, for example, through the aforementioned concept of hope, and Ghassan Hage has done precisely that. He has asked whether it is not hope itself that conjures the future into existence (Hage 2016: 465). Elsewhere he has suggested that what unifies the complex discourses of hope is that they always express modes in which human beings relate to the future (Hage 2003a: 10). Hage is concerned specifically with what he calls societal hope, society's capacity to distribute opportunities to its members. He defines this mode of hopefulness as "a 'historically' acquired sense of security in facing what the future will bring" (Hage 2003a: 26). Since our present is in many ways molded by what we hope for from the future, hope brings different temporalities together, and our hopes are again molded by our past experiences and our cultural context – in other words, I would argue, by our position in tradition.

When pondering hopes and aspirations, a concrete way to try to address the future in anthropological research is to look at the decisions we make in our everyday lives. Decisions are made based on the kind of future one aspires to achieve and, as is the case with all human action, these aspirations are often multidimensional, and even contradictory. Though people do not always consciously weigh up the pros and cons of every decision they make in the light of a bigger life project, values and hopes nevertheless direct the choices they are making. Ideas about a good life – or at least as good as deemed achievable – inform actions and bring the future to seemingly

mundane practices, such as building and renovating houses, getting married, studying, applying for scholarships and visas, saving money, and creating networks. When talking about what is to come and how people plan and prepare for the future, hope emerges in one way or another: even if we are preparing for the worst, we nevertheless hope for the best. As one of my interlocutors put it, even in the dim reality of Palestinians in Lebanon there is always hope. Hence, as Hage states, "[i]t is only because we have hope that we continue to suffer and endure the ills" (Hage 2003a: 11). And it is with a sense of hopefulness that my interlocutors made decisions and planned their futures in the hope of a better life, and in the hope of being able to provide better opportunities and thus futures for their children.

Another way to grasp the future is to look at the things we are waiting for in our present lives. Waiting is the modality through which the future becomes part of our present being: in waiting we are directed toward what is to come. Though we all have experiences of waiting, it is not something that is homogeneously experienced. Like hoping (Hage 2003a: 10), it can be directed to a multitude of ends, and that which is awaited, along with its context, always affects how we engage with it, its intensity and the mode it takes. It is an entirely different experience to wait for an answer from a friend about whether he can join you on a walk to the corniche than to wait for a decision about whether your family is entitled to hardship case support from UNRWA or to wait for a political solution and the implementation of the right of return. As John Rundell (2009: 51) notes, "[w]e all wait for futures—yet not for the same ones, nor in the same way, nor at the same tempo". He further clarifies that, in waiting, "the futures to which it [waiting] gestures are also indeterminate".

Consequently, waiting is always a precarious activity, as the actualization of that which is awaited is always infused with uncertainties: one can never know beforehand when the waiting is going to end, if it will end at all, or how the actualized reality will correspond with what was hoped for. Waiting can be construed as a passive activity, forced upon people in precarious conditions who are stripped of the possibility to take the steps they would like to take. Scholars have considered this type of waiting in relation to marriage (Schubert 2009), asylum seekers (Bendixsen & Eriksen 2018), and the refugee condition (Brun 2015; Horst & Grabska 2015), to mention just a few of the themes covered. However, observed from another perspective, waiting can also be an active decision. Craig Jeffrey (2008: 957) writes that

> waiting must be understood not as the capacity to ride out the passage of time
> or as the absence of action, but rather as an active, conscious, materialized
> practice in which people forge new political strategies, in which time and space

often become the objects of reflection, and in which historical inequalities manifest themselves in new ways.

In the context of Palestinians, waiting can also be viewed as a mode of resistance: waiting for return rather that resettling, waiting for better times and the end of the occupation rather than finding an individual solution to experienced hardships from somewhere else. Waiting is thus one manifestation of endurance, or *sumud* (see Schiocchet 2011), steadfastness against the wearing realities of occupation and refugeeness. However, regardless of whether the waiting is seen as a moment of stagnation or a political project, people are nevertheless pursuing multiple things in their lives *while* waiting: learning languages, getting educated, starting families, earning a living. As has been shown by several ethnographies, being in a mode of waiting does not equate to staying still, passive, or unchanged (el-Shaarawi 2015; Turner 2015), as even stuckedness is entangled with "transformation, movement and volatility" (Brun 2016: 393).

Waiting in Palestine has been observed, for example, in relation to movement, or more specifically the lack of it, at the checkpoints around the West Bank (see Jamal 2016; Peteet 2017). Amal Jamal (2016) writes that at checkpoints Palestinians can predict neither the length nor the outcome of the waiting, but he also notes that waiting has become a universal Palestinian characteristic that defines their being beyond the limitations of movement. The endless waiting has created an intense sense of crisis, but it has contributed to a common Palestinian awareness despite the differences in location (Jamal 2016: 372). Julie Peteet further highlights that the waiting of Palestinians is not "ordinary" but rather a form of punishment and control (Peteet 2017: 141–142; see also Joronen 2017b). In addition to the refugees waiting for return while trying to construct normalcy in their everyday lives, Palestinians wait for permits, wait to pass the checkpoints, and wait for the "next restriction, the next moment of violence, and the next disaster" (Peteet 2017: 142). And, simultaneously, they "all wait for solution, for justice, for recognition, and security" (ibid.). Laila el-Haddad summarizes Palestinians' experience of the temporality of being by describing the multiple modes of waiting that define the everyday:

> For this is what the Palestinian does: we wait. For an answer to be given, for a question to be asked; for a marriage proposal to be made, for a divorce to be finalized; for a border to open, for a permit to be issued; for a war to end; for a war to begin; for a child to be born; for one to die a martyr; for retirement or a new job; for exile to a better place and for return to the only place that knows us; for our prisoners to come home; for our homes to no longer be

prisons; for our children to be free; for freedom from a time when we no longer have to wait. (el-Haddad 2009)

Waiting no doubt has a special modality in the context of protracted conflicts, when experienced uncertainties give precedence to suspended temporality. For Palestinian refugees it has come to mean protracted temporariness, with connotations and consequences for everyday life and future aspirations, which I will unravel in the following chapters.

Vulnerable futures

Regardless of the direction it takes, the future is always inherently defined by its vulnerability. Judith Butler has famously stated that "[t]he body that exists in its exposure and proximity to others, to external force, to all that might subjugate and subdue it, is vulnerable to injury" (Butler 2010: 61). As bodily beings we are all inherently vulnerable, while the extent to which the vulnerability manifests itself is dependent on relations of care and neglect, on what the value of our lives and bodily integrity is considered to be. The vulnerability of the human condition is most clearly manifested when we think in the future tense: it is not possible to know for certain what will happen and where the decisions made in the present will lead. Neither bodily nor temporal vulnerability is equally distributed, as they are carried to different extents by different bodies. The vulnerability of futures is amplified in contexts of protracted crisis that are defined by uncertainty and precariousness, and both the figure of the Palestinian and that of the refugee are bodies in which vulnerability is extensively underlined.

Not only do Palestinian refugees experience the uncertain vulnerability of their futures, but heightened vulnerability is a fact of their daily lives. When the vulnerability of the future is encountered by a community whose position is in itself an amplified manifestation of vulnerability (their being refugees, stateless, occupied, impoverished, excluded, discriminated against, ungrievable, forgotten), the hopes for the future usually include ways of countering that vulnerability. The vulnerability can thus become the driving force: acting from a position of vulnerability to counter the vulnerabilities of the future. Hence, vulnerability should not be considered a passivate state but as a basis of action, as proposed by Butler, Gambetti and Sabsay (2016). Anthropologist Henrik Vigh (2008: 10–11) makes the same point when he notes that crisis, even when it becomes chronic and affects "our ability to plan ahead, to actualize our dreams and hopes" (Vigh 2008: 16), does not automatically lead to

passivity but rather defines *the possibilities* for action in a given context. When considered in relation to the future, vulnerabilities experienced in the present, and observed in relation to the past, are what force the precarious to take action when they direct toward the future, to try to seek a solution, and to find a way to transform their lives and living conditions.

When considering the acuteness with which change is sought, the relevance of life stage emerges. Attempting to encounter vulnerability of the future from the position of middle age is different than from the position of a young adult or an elderly person. For the elderly, the future can mean fear about insufficient access to care and, as Ilana Feldman has observed, this not only "contribute[s] to people's deaths, but the persistent experience of inadequacy contributes to the degradation of expectations and hope for the future" (Feldman 2017: 51). For the middle-aged, on the other hand, the uncertainties of the future can relate to their children and families, to how to fulfill the role of taking care of them and to ensure that they are able to achieve a good life. Finally, for young adults the future looms large (see also Schielke 2015: 23) and vulnerabilities can have far-reaching consequences. At the age at which they should be reaching full adulthood, limited resources can mean that they are unable to take that step, having to settle for an undesirable situation or resorting to radical means to reach a situation in which they can at least have the possibility to try and build their adult lives.

Though possessing limited resources with which to make a change happen, deprived communities often do not have the luxury 'of living in the present', because the uncertainties force them to think ahead, to take their chance when one emerges, and even to make drastic decisions to secure the continuation of the vulnerable flow of everyday life. It is also the vulnerability of Palestinians' situation that affects their mode of engaging with the future, and here the relevance of negotiation emerges. When the conditions do not secure an abundance of possibilities to choose from, achieving the expected and hoped-for futures requires more work than in conditions in which it is possible to enjoy basic security and have more freedom to choose one's own path in life. The compromised chances to fulfill expectations and obligations thus create a condition in which it becomes necessary to negotiate what is to be achieved and how. For Palestinian refugees, the need for such negotiations is heightened, as it is often not possible to fulfill both political and personal/relational obligations with the same solution. Therefore, Palestinian refugees are forced to negotiate their paths to the future in a manner that reconciles these differing expectations and, at the same time, they renegotiate the politics of being a Palestinian refugee.

As pointed out by Johnson-Hanks (2005), the experienced uncertainty does not necessarily lead to recklessness or to acting without a structure, but rather pre-structures expectations in a certain way. This, again, brings the past into play with plans for the future made in the present moment. When adversities of different magnitudes are a question of *when* rather than *if*, the events that "break with the past" (Opitz & Tellman 2015: 124) become a structuring feature of lived reality. Understanding how protracted conflict, or situations of political and economic stagnation, have evolved is a necessity for comprehending how expectations are structured, as past experiences form the precedents for how it is assumed the future will reveal itself and how people act regarding their aspirations. Thus, delineating the ethnographic context – its past and present – is vital in anthropological explorations on the future.

3.3   Spatialities of exclusion, identity, and rightlessness

Another important concept for this research, alongside temporality, is that of spatiality. Understood as intertwined, both of these are present in the premise of the research. Geographer Edward W. Soja (2010: 13–16) has noted that though in Western social thought temporality has tended to receive more attention, the spatial turn that has emerged across social sciences has brought attention to the fact that

> we are just as much spatial as temporal beings, that our existential spatiality and temporality are essentially or ontologically coequal, equivalent in explanatory power and behavioral significance, interwoven in a mutually formative relation. (Soja 2010: 16)

To these two formative concepts Soja adds that of sociality, and according to him it is acknowledging all three of them and their complex interaction that provides the best starting point for making theoretical and practical sense of the world (Soja 1999). It is these three concepts that are central, especially when the attention is on how spaces are lived, which is the focus of this work. Soja elaborates that

> [h]uman life is consequently and consequentially spatial, temporal, and social, simultaneously and interactively real and imagined. Our geographies, like our histories, take on material form as social relations become spatial but are also creatively represented in images, ideas, and imaginings […]. (Soja 2010: 18)

The spatial is an inseparable part of everyday life and of being-in-the-world in general, and this is how it is approached here as well. Yet, though central, space does not emerge as an independent analytical tool but rather as intertwined with the other topics and themes. Furthermore, it is important to note that 'a refugee' is in itself a spatial character that discloses experiences of displacement, forced movement, and territorial bordering of the world. In fact, it is the figure of the refugee that directs my attention to spatiality: the lived and experienced space of a refugee camp, the spatialized belonging that arises from the specific experiences of dispossession and displacement in a territorially segmented world and, linked to this, the spatially defined access to rights and hence to possibilities that is closely tied to nation-state structures and citizenship.

The concentration on camp dwellers assumes a certain specificity of camps as places of dwelling that needs to be understood in order to comprehend the ways in which they frame life within them. For those living in camps, they form the spatial dimension of the everyday, which discloses different temporal layers, and which also ties other spatialities into its fabric, in this case the connections to Palestine and the relational ties to different parts of the world, which are relevant either as the locus of aspirations or as part of networks of significant relationships. Furthermore, hopes and aspirations often have their spatial dimensions, and it is important to understand how spatial identifications play into these processes. In a world of nation-states, these identifications often get a nationalist and territorially bound dimension that is certified via legal statuses, connecting people to territorial entities that are expected to care for them (see Hage 2003a).

It is thus not only the spatial frames of the everyday but also the understandings of spatialized belonging and access to rights that emerge in the ways in which futures are imagined, in other words, how spaces are made meaning of. It is equally important to recognize that ideas about belonging are always sites of contestation, but especially so in contexts in which the land itself is a site of both physical and narrative struggles (e.g. Abufarha 2008; Long 2009; Salamanca et al. 2012). As Edward Said has said, "[j]ust as none of us is outside or beyond geography, none of us is completely free from the struggle over geography" (Said 1994: 6). Though these struggles over land are not the focus of this research, it is an important contextualization to keep in mind, because the present lived in the space of the refugee camp is, in the end, an outcome of these settler colonial processes of displacement.

Spatial configuration of the camp

In recent decades, the spatiality of the camp has gained increasing academic interest and camps have been analyzed as exceptional spaces, the logic of which needs to be scrutinized separately from that of other spaces of enclosure and exclusion. Camps have been characterized as non-places (Augé 1995; Diken 2004), as the new biopolitical paradigm (Agamben 1998, 1999, 2005; Minca 2015), as places of humanitarian governance (Agier 2011; Feldman 2015a; Hyndman 2000), and as a means to safeguard the national order of things (Turner 2016; see also Malkki 1992). Irrespective of their specific configuration, purpose, and nature, camps are spaces that are demarcated, that have a more or less clear division between the inside and the outside. They are a means of segregating a group of people from the surrounding social and political order. Yet, although segregated, camp spatialities are produced in the relations between people and in their everyday practices (Ramadan 2013) that also cross the camp borders. These relations that involve people, but also materialities, institutions, and organizations, tie the camps to their surroundings but also highlight their special nature by revealing the separation that exists between them and the spaces around them.

During the past decade, Giorgio Agamben has undoubtedly been the most cited scholar in research on camps and encampment, as his conceptualizations on state of exception and *homo sacer* have been applied to several settings of biopolitical governance (e.g. Dines et al. 2015; Gregory 2006; Peteet 2016; Rygiel 2011; Schinkel 2010). Especially since the beginning of the so-called war on terror, the conditions of refugees, migrants, and asylum seekers, as well as the new security apparatuses, have been approached with an Agambenian framework (Ek 2006; Minca 2006). The situation of Palestinian refugees is among the ontic contexts that have been analyzed (e.g. Hanafi & Long 2010), though it is first and foremost the Israeli occupation and its mechanisms of control that have been scrutinized with the Agambenian conceptualizations (see Lentin 2008). Agamben has famously called the camp the *nomos* of our time, which "as the absolute space of exception […] is topologically different from a simple space of confinement" (Agamben 1998: 20). According to him, the camp signals the political space of modernity and has replaced *polis* as the paradigmatic mode of biopolitics.

The state of exception is a way to include that which is excluded (Agamben 1998: 17–18, 2005: 35) and the camp is the space that is opened up when the exception begins to become the rule (Agamben 1998: 168–169). A camp can, in fact, exist anywhere where a zone of indistinction is created (Ek 2006; Minca 2006), as it comes

into existence every time we enter into a threshold of indistinction, i.e. when the rule of law is suspended, and bare life comes into being. Bare life, a life that is excluded from political existence[8], is the life of *homo sacer*, who may be killed without a homicide being committed, who can be murdered but not sacrificed. *Homo sacer* is a figure of political ontology (Agamben 1998: 182; see also Abbott 2012) that enables rendering those who are reduced to it disposable, while simultaneously keeping them within the realm of law (as the included exclusion).

The included exclusion, bare life, can be found in the character of the refugee who is cast out of the political order of nation-states but at the same time included by being the one who shows us the limits of the current system through their exclusion. For Agamben, it is, in fact, the character of the refugee that radically calls into question the principles of the nation-state (Agamben 1995: 117). Enclosing refugees in camps means that they are not included in the national body and thus do not enjoy the same rights as citizens. Camps can even be viewed as extra-territorial, for they do not belong to the national space in which they are established, which allows for the existence of different rights and forms of governance (Agier 2011: 71). This separation is often symbolized by checkpoints and identity control at the borders of camps. Simultaneously, however, camp dwellers are the very target of state policies, included as exceptional figures without the full protection of the law.

Refugee camps can be conceptualized as a state of exception, as those dwelling in them are excluded from the juridical protection of the sovereign on whose territory the camps exist. They can also be seen as manifesting the same logic of governance as other camps, that of segregation and exclusion. The camp's actual anthropological form, however, differs considerably from, let's say, that of a concentration or prison camp. In these two kinds of camp space, biopolitics can quickly turns into thanatopolitics, as those inside them are reduced to unprotected bare life, people whose lives can be taken without the normal juridical consequences. In a refugee camp, on the other hand, biopolitics usually acquires a more Foucauldian form through the nurturing presence of the humanitarian regime. Refugee camps are not, therefore, merely spaces of rightlessness created through exception; they are also spaces of care and protection, even though the humanitarian regime of the camps helps to maintain the system of nation-states and of privileges secured by citizenship.

The territorial – and legal – separation of refugees is related to the order of nation-states, wherein rights and care are distributed based on citizenship, which also signals belonging to a given territory. Tying people to geographic territories, in most cases by birth, is a key feature of the nation-state system, and in this context a refugee

becomes a problem that needs to be controlled and managed by different rules and actors, humanitarian organizations being one of them. Michel Agier is among the anthropologists who have approached refugee camps from the perspective of humanitarian governance, exploring how camps are used in confining the "undesirable" (2011). He reminds us that every camp is governed by a series of organizations – UNCHR or UNRWA, the International Red Cross, and a multitude of smaller local and international organizations – bodies that by gathering refugees in camps and selecting who the beneficiaries will be are locally exercising sovereign power and illustrating the Western world's capacity for domination (Agier 2011: 201, 208). Simon Turner (2016), on the other hand, has described camps as the preferred means of containing displaced people yet, in practice, the encampment of refugees and immigrants has been much more common in the more deprived parts of the world than in the global north (Agier 2002: 320). Furthermore, the desirability of using camps in containing refugees is always context-specific, and Lebanon, for example, has refrained from establishing official refugee camps for Syrian refugees because the Lebanese experience is colored by the protracted presence of displaced Palestinians, which is something they do not want to reproduce.

When it comes to the logic of a camp, Marion Fresia and Andreas von Känel (2016) have stressed that a camp space cannot be reduced to a single rationality – whether it be the state of exception or humanitarian governance – since different tensions are inherent in the camp apparatus itself. Different sovereignties are involved in the production of camp spaces, as has been highlighted by Adam Ramadan in the case of Palestinians in Lebanon (Ramadan 2013; see also Ramadan & Fregonese 2017) and, though they might not be sovereignties in the sense Agamben defines the term[9], they still use power in and over the camps and are central in shaping them and the lives that are lived in them. Furthermore, refugee camps cannot be considered separate from the refugees who dwell in them. Markers, such as gender and socioeconomic position, greatly affect how the camp spaces manifest themselves, how they function as spaces of biopolitical governance through nurture and control, and how they enable and disable everyday activities.

Consequently, it is the unfolding of the everyday lives of the refugees that makes the complexity and contextualities of the camps explicit. Understanding how camps are formed and governed, and why, functions as a background that helps in contemplating how life is able to unfold in these distinctive spaces. While it is true that refugee camps are easily considered merely as places of emergency and suffering, which might hide the ordinary activities that are also part of camp life (see Fresia & von Känel 2015: 1), their ordinariness should not be overstated, because camps

frame life differently than, for example, town and city spaces do. Furthermore, in the Palestinian case the camps have been framed as markers of temporariness, and while in practice they are durable places of dwelling, to bypass their exceptionality would mean normalizing them as spaces. To understand the multiple ways in which the camp manifests itself in practice, anthropologists have explored the formation of everyday lives in refugee camps (e.g. Achilli 2015; Fresia & von Känel 2016; Gren 2015) and, like them, I approach Palestinian refugee camps as places of dwelling, as specific spatial configurations where the majority of my interlocutors have been born and where their everyday lives are lived.

In crossing from the exceptionalities that define the camp as a spatial configuration to lived experiences, François Debrix has noted that Judith Butler's discussions on vulnerability and precariousness can be useful, as "Butler's approach seeks to rediscover traces of life and the living within the multiply assembled political, cultural, ethical, and affective spaces of the camp" (2015: 452). Butler's discussions on precariousness and vulnerability can help in analyzing the camps as lived and experienced spaces. As previously discussed, vulnerability and precariousness are unequally distributed in corporeal terms, and the same can be said in relation to spatialities. Refugee camps are vulnerable and precarious by definition, as they embody dispossession, exclusion, social and physical separation, and often legal uncertainty. Vulnerability is thus how the camp as a state of exception and a form of humanitarian governance comes to be experienced. By paying attention to this, as well as to the function of camps as exceptional spaces that include the excluded and to the multiple relationalities that are involved in producing them, it is possible to observe how camps frame the lives of those dwelling in them.

Temporariness, belonging, and spatial identities

Refugee camps are meant to be temporary places, which are destined to be dissolved once the reason for the flight, whether it be a natural disaster or an armed conflict, no longer exists, and not places of belonging in a similar manner as other places of dwelling. Yet, the very establishment of a camp gives the situation a sense of permanence, for encampment signals the need to organize in the refugee situation. Michel Agier (2002) has noted that in addition to the obvious consequences of continuing hostilities, the humanitarian aid mechanism generates effects that make the camps persist. Camps create employment opportunities, both for the international humanitarian regime and for the refugee population itself, and they

constitute spaces for aid distribution. As a result, "the camps gradually become the sites of an enduring organization of space, social life and system of power that exist nowhere else" (Agier 2002: 322).

The Palestinian case is an extreme example of how refugee camps can turn into durable places of dwelling, as they have housed refugees for around 70 years (and in the case of the emergency camps in Jordan, more than fifty years). In addition to the reasons addressed by Agier, political connotations have contributed to the persistence of Palestinian camp spaces. Camps, and refugeeness itself, are important political markers, and holding on to them is a way to reproduce the connection and belonging to Palestine: a young man from a refugee camp in Jordan described the camp as being part of Palestine and, on another occasion, when I asked whether there was a difference between Palestinians living in camps and those living in cities and towns in Jordan, a Palestinian acquaintance living in a town close to Amman remarked that camp dwellers were "more single-minded" when it came to Palestine. He emphasized that though he himself was also thinking about Palestine, "they [camp refugees] are thinking Palestine and the return more because they are still living in the camps".

No matter how durable the refugee situation has become, the camp nevertheless constitutes a spatial manifestation of temporariness and non-belonging, and this is stressed also in the Palestinian case. Though not all refugees live in camps and not all those who live in camps are refugees, as spatial configurations the camps tell of the presence of a population that is considered alien to the national body. In some cases, this non-belonging is enforced not only by the host community or the humanitarian institutions but also by the refugees themselves. An example of this is Liisa Malkki's (1995) influential ethnography on Burundian refugees in Tanzania. Her fieldwork in the refugee settlement of Mishamo and in the town of Kigoma and its surroundings revealed differences of identity formation between those in camp settings and those outside them: those dwelling in the refugee settlement with other refugees expressed a deeper attachment to Burundi and engaged in the building of a mythico-history of their origin and inevitable return, whereas those dwelling in urban settings were more likely to hide their refugee identity in the hope of assimilating into their new living environment.

This conception that associates refugee camps with non-belonging tells of territorialized national identity, which is a topic that has been discussed extensively in geography, anthropology, and refugee studies for some time (e.g. Brun 2001, Malkki 1992, see also "territorial trap", Agnew 1994). Territory itself has been analyzed as a geopolitical device of control (Elden 2010) but it can also be seen as a

"sociospatial context where the 'living together' is produced, organized and negotiated through the continuous interplay between 'top-down' discourses and 'bottom-up' mundane practices and lived experiences" (Antonsich 2011: 425). The naturalization of the link between people and place, which is closely connected to the naturalization of territorialized divisions based on the nation-state order, has created refugees as "a matter out of place", as pathological existence that needs to be resettled in its "proper place" (critique, see Malkki 1992).

However, questioning these views, and the essentializing ways in which people are tied to territorial entities, does not negate the importance of spatialized identities. The feeling of belonging to a national whole can be a major component of a sense of self, without taking a xenophobic form that entails exclusion of 'the other' from the same whole. Cathrine Brun (2001) has noted that attaching oneself to a territory is part of "spatial strategies that refugees and displaced people develop, in the contradictory experience of being physically present in one location, but at the same time living with a feeling of belonging somewhere else". Being part of a national "we" can also enhance "a sense of perfection" by introducing capacities and potentials that can be appropriated by the self-image simply by being part of a nation that is believed to hold those capabilities (Hage 2009a: 67). Thus, conceptions such as "we Palestinians are highly educated" can create a sense of potential, and in some case also a sense of possibility, that could be actualized on an individual level.

Nevertheless, it surely is, as Kathleen Fincham has noted, that Palestinian refugees' public identities are configured in relation to more than one nation-state (Fincham 2012), and that belonging is negotiated not only within the nation-state frame but also in relation to the camps and the position Palestinians have in the host society. Even when this is the case, the sense of *national* belonging still gravitates toward the bounded territory of Mandate-era Palestine (see Culcasi 2016; Ramadan 2009a). Yet, in her research with Palestinian refugees living in Jordan, Karen Culcasi came to notice that as well as being this geographically defined area, Palestine as a territory was conceptualized as abstract and amorphous, as something her interlocutors carried in their hearts and that was symbolized by popular images that declared rootedness and/or dispossession (Culcasi 2016).

It is also self-evident that, as with any nation, Palestine can mean many different things and Palestinian national identity can be expressed in multiple ways, none of which are reducible to territorial thinking. Nevertheless, the assumed temporariness of refugee existence and the idea of return maintain a spatial identity that links the refugees to a territoriality of a (forthcoming) nation-state other than the one in which they currently dwell. Because the discourse of return, in its multiple forms (see

Richter-Devroe 2013), is such an integral part of the Palestinian national narrative, Palestine as a homeland, whether as a territorially bound entity or a more abstract idea, is part of the future. Even when it does not emerge as a concrete, achievable possibility, it is important to acknowledge the continuous relevance of such a spatial identification and the ways in which it is signified.

Spatiality of rights and possibilities

Rogers Brubaker (1992: 21) has noted that "the modern state is not simply a territorial organization but a membership organization, an association of citizens". Consequently, one way to apprehend the continuous relevance of nation-states is to observe the ways in which basic rights continue to be divided in this world of global, transnational interconnectedness. This focuses attention on citizenship, and on how it continues to provide and secure not only political but socioeconomic rights (the status of resident can also provide access to social rights but it does not secure them in the same manner, see Brubaker 1989; Sainsbury 2012). Regarding even the most basic human rights, Hannah Arendt has famously stated that

> [n]o paradox of contemporary politics is filled with a more poignant irony than the discrepancy between the efforts of well-meaning idealists who stubbornly insist on regarding as "inalienable" those human rights, which are enjoyed only by citizens of the most prosperous and civilized countries, and the situation of the rightless themselves. (Arendt 1973: 279)

Though it is clear that the situation has changed since Arendt wrote her critique after the Second World War, with the emergence of an abundance of conventions, international bodies, and courts that are supposed to protect the basic rights of different groups, refugees among them, the relevance of citizenship has remained, and political sociologist Engin Isin (2013) has even bluntly stated that the idea of natural or human rights is nonsense. Repeating Arendt's claim, Isin reminds us that "[t]he paradox is that without the force of (state) law human rights remain unenforceable and yet the most vulnerable are those without the protection of the state" (Isin 2013: 55).

For Arendt, it is precisely the figure of the stateless – the essence of Palestinians' being in Lebanon and, in practice, also in the West Bank – that clearly shows us the limits of those rights we have come to conceptualize as belonging to every human by birth. Here the term stateless, as has been stressed by Ayten Gündoğdu (2015: 2), refers not only to those who, de jure, do not have a sovereign country that recognizes

them as citizens, but to all those who have lost the protections and rights secured by a citizenship, refugees among them. Similarly, for Agamben refugee is the border concept that reveals how meaningless human rights become when there is no citizenship of a nation-state to secure them. For him, "[t]he paradox here is that precisely the figure that should have incarnated the rights of man par excellence, the refugee, constitutes instead the radical crisis of this concept" (Agamben 1995: 116).

Membership of and belonging to a nation-state thus continue to define the type of rights a person is entitled to, and without a citizenship that ties a person to a nation-state the protection of even basic rights is easily jeopardized. Citizenship allows access to be gained to a territory and determines the type of treatment and rights it is possible to enjoy (Bloom & Feldman 2011; Brubaker 1992: 23–24). As rights are officially recognized on the basis of the legal status one possesses, it is not surprising that the stateless seek a citizenship, or at least a residency, in order to gain access to secured rights or, in Arendtian terms, to the right to have rights. The legal status further affects how place is experienced, and is involved, for example, in producing experiences of displacement and return (Kelly 2009: 27). Though acts of citizenship can be, and are, practiced without someone having de jure citizenship (see Isin 2013), a sense of security is hard to obtain without having the official status that assures "that the protection will not be removed in the future" (Bloom & Feldman 2011: 39). In these cases, the benefits associated with the official status of a citizen usually concern the socioeconomic rights this can provide rather than political agency (cf. Lazar & Nuijten 2013): the right to work, the right to social and economic support, access to schooling and other services, and so on.

The spatiality of rights becomes evident in that nation-states are assumed to have a special obligation toward those who 'belong' to their territory, in other words, toward their citizenry. The state is expected to further the interests of (Brubaker 1992: 21) and care for (Hage 2003a) their citizens. Those who wish to have better access to rights, and to the possibilities they provide, than those their current place of residence can offer have to cross borders. Though presence in a state territory does not in itself secure access to all rights (cf. Bosniak 2007), it nevertheless enables the possibility of claiming them, and of actualizing those possibilities not present in the country of origin, for example obtaining better employment and education. The need to cross borders, however, concerns not only those in search of a status that could secure their basic rights but all those hoping to have better possibilities to live the type of life to which they aspire. The unequal access to rights and possibilities draws attention to the mobilities of those who seek opportunities for a better life. The vulnerable living in precarious conditions are at times prepared to take

enormous risks to realize their social imaginaries and widen their social options (see Vigh 2009). When there are no prospects of achieving the aspired-to future, or at least a life that could be considered worthy, taking risky journeys is a way of escaping the "social death" (Hage 2003b) that is experienced in the places in which the everyday is defined by rightlessness and a lack of possibilities.

What complicates Palestinian refugees' search for rights is that there is no sovereign Palestinian nation-state that could be expected to care for their needs, a state that would be "of" and "for" them. In a world-system of "territorial jurisdictions" that exist "for" a nation, everyone is expected to belong to a state and possess a citizenship that allows them to access rights (Brubaker 1992: 26, 28, 31). When this is not the case, gaining access to other "territorial jurisdictions" is compromised, as there is no sovereign that will answer for them, none to which to turn to claim rights and protection. Many agreements and contracts – whether those concerning basic human rights that rely on states to implement them or ones that assume reciprocal obligations between states – presuppose a citizenship, a membership of a nation-state. In this configuration, the stateless become an anomaly who are under-protected and whose access to "the basic goods and opportunities that shape life chances" (Brubaker 1992: 24) can be severely compromised.

That these contemplations of the spatiality of rights and possibilities are relevant for understanding the futures Palestinian refugees are envisioning becomes evident in the following chapters, in which I turn to delineate the past, present and future of the Palestinian refugee communities. Rightlessness, precariousness and vulnerability are all terms used in framing the realities Palestinians face in their everyday lives (e.g. Fiddian-Qasmiyeh 2016; Hammami 2016; Joronen 2017b; Pérez 2011), and though I do not want to essentialize the relation between nation-state and rights (Salih 2018), my interlocutors nevertheless confronted the deprived conditions of everyday life, and their own lack of state protection, within the present territorial configuration of the world. As Jarrett Zigon (2018: 49) reminds us, "to claim rights is always to do so in relation to an institution of power that maintains the bounded totality to which one has been 'assigned'". As "the bounded totality" of the nation-state to which "one has been 'assigned'" via citizenship is the main gatekeeper in access to rights, getting into this system is the most viable way of accessing the rights one hopes to attain. Certainly not all of the refugees were focused on the nationalist dimension of state, but this did come to represent the rights and possibilities they hoped to achieve. Citizenship became thus understood in its 'Western' form, as individuals' right to access rights (cf. Joseph & Slyomovics 2000). My interlocutors had to negotiate their hopes in a reality in which inequalities had a clear spatial dimension, and in which

rights and possibilities were very much defined by the place in which one dwelt and the status one possessed.

4   The past: the diverse temporal layers of Palestinian refugeeness

> Appeals to the past are among the commonest of strategies in interpretations on the present. What animates such appeals is not only disagreement about what happened in the past and what the past was, but uncertainty about whether the past really is past, over and concluded, or whether it continues, albeit in different forms perhaps. (Said 1994: 1)

In the previous chapter, I dwelt on the hermeneutic nature of being and its temporal configurations and, from that perspective, the uncertainty raised in the above quote from Edward Said gets a rather straightforward answer: past most definitely is not past but very much present, informing and framing understanding, being, and ways of doing. For Palestinian refugees, past is ever-present in an amplified manner due to the structural continuities of Israel's settler colonial policies and tactics (see Salamanca et al. 2012; also Zureik 1979, 2016; Veracini 2006, 2013), but also in the form of the political narratives that tie Palestinian refugees to their ancestral dwelling places and suggest a future that sees a return to them. Several scholars have observed that for Palestinian refugees living in "a protracted not-yet" (Said 1993: 165), narrating history and remembering the past is a way of holding on to the belonging to Palestine (Abu-Lughod & Sa'di 2007; Davis 2011; Masalha 2018). These narratives form an ambient presence that informs the refugees' understandings. The past is also there, however, in a more mundane manner, embedded in the places in which Palestinian refugees live. One could say, paraphrasing Marc Augé, that Palestinian refugees are not only making history in their day-to-day lives but constantly living in it (Augé 1995: 55).

Those who hold power in nation-states – and internationally – easily come to determine which narratives are transmitted to the general public, through, for example, school teaching (see Peled-Elhanan 2012; Papadakis 2008), and which narratives are sidelined. Though the sovereign in every situation needs the continuous performance of foundational and royal violence (Hansen & Stepputat 2005: 7), the unequal bearing of competing narratives is evident, especially in times of conflict, when "history is often used to propagate a narrative focusing on the suffering of the nation and to legitimate its political goals" (Papadakis 2008: 128). In

Israel/Palestine, the appropriation of history for political purposes is extremely common, whether for proclaiming prior residence and deeper attachment to the land, or to disqualify the other party's demands with a specific reading of events.

This context of competing narratives makes it extremely important to remember that, though told from different perspectives with multiple voices, history cannot be reduced to mere discourses of equal bearing: though history is always read from the standpoint of the present, as the hermeneutic approach has also stressed, it is not the same as endlessly fabricating the past, as certain events did take place while others did not. As anthropologist Julie Peteet reminds us, "[i]n situations of competing claims to space, to assert that all histories are constructed can be problematic, implying equity in claims and tacitly suggesting that the political status quo is acceptable" (Peteet 2005: 4).

In order not to be trapped in the status quo, and to do justice to the experiences of Palestinian refugees, it is crucial to review in detail how Palestinians were made refugees and how their lives in exile have unfolded. As the hermeneutic approach to temporality stresses, present carries history in itself, and to know the historical developments is a prerequisite for comprehending both what we are faced with today and what we might face tomorrow. To understand the realities of the Palestinian refugees, we must discuss the events that have taken place in the host countries, which have positioned the refugees within the frame of their own historically determined social and political constructions. These histories are, of course, constitutive narratives on the trajectories of the Palestinian refugee condition, but they are also spatial ones, as space is "the dimension of multiple trajectories, a simultaneity of stories-so-far" (Massey 2005: 24). They tell of the loss of Palestine, of home, land, and homeland, and they tell of the spatial experience of exile: the formation of the camps and their often-turbulent histories. They tell of wars and occupations, of movement and recurring dispossession. And they tell of the relational spaces of the host sovereigns, of how Palestinian refugees have been positioned within them, and hence the type of life they enable.

To cover a context of several decades of dispossession and conflict is not an easy task, much less when there are three fields to engage with, and hence I concentrate on those events and developments that have been central in structuring Palestinian refugees' position and living conditions. The three fields – Lebanon, the West Bank, and Jordan – are intertwined through multiple historical and political interconnections but they nevertheless have their own specific characteristics that define the manifestations of the dispossession and thus the lives and possibilities of those dwelling in them. For the aims of this dissertation, it is crucial to acknowledge

these differences, as they enable sense to be made of how the futures are negotiated in the different locations of Palestinian exile.

4.1   Steps toward Nakba

When talking about Palestinian refugees and their contemporary lives in the Middle East and beyond, an obvious place to start is the shared historical origin of their refugeeness: the events of 1948, which Palestinians know as Nakba, catastrophe. This not only created the so-called Palestinian refugee problem but also constituted a point of rupture, both cultural and physical, for the whole Palestinian people. Due to Nakba, a way of life was rapidly broken down as rural village existence was replaced by that of the refugee camp. The social and political community as it was prior to 1948 disappeared, and new communal configurations started to be formed within the scattered communities.

Nakba did not erupt from nowhere but was the culmination of processes that had started decades before. Therefore, the history of Palestinian refugees cannot be considered separately from the historical origin of Israel as a Jewish state and the Zionist ideology behind it. For centuries, Jews had been a persecuted minority across Europe[10] and 'the Jewish people' was composed of separate communities living under different sovereignties. The idea of the Jewish people having their own state has its roots in the nationalist awakenings of the 19th century. At that time, two strands of thinking existed among the political and intellectual elite of Jewish communities about how to overcome the blight Jews had faced as an ethnoreligious group: the answer was either to assimilate into the surrounding majorities or to segregate completely (Kornberg 1993). Those who did not believe in – or for political reasons support – assimilation, thought that the creation of a nation-state for Jews was the best way to secure the wellbeing, rights, and freedom of the Jewish communities. This line of thinking became known as political Zionism (e.g. Avineri 2014: 85, 194–195).

To enhance the aspirations to statehood, the organizational structures of the political Zionist movement were established at the end of the 19th century, and deliberations on the form and location of the prospective state took place among the first generation of Zionist leaders. The First Zionist Congress, held in 1897, was the initial concrete step in bringing the plans drafted on paper closer to actualization. Theodor Herzl, a prominent Zionist leader and author of *The Jewish State,* a book that provided a blueprint for the Jewish state that was clearly on a par with European

modernist and colonial traditions, initiated the founding of the World Zionist Organization (Avineri 2014: 1), which then took as its aim the establishment of a Jewish homeland in Palestine[11].

Twenty years after the First Zionist Congress, the idea of a Jewish state received much-needed international backing from the Foreign Secretary of the United Kingdom, Arthur James Balfour. In 1917, a short letter addressed to the British Zionist leader Lord Rothschild and signed by Balfour declared the United Kingdom's support for founding a Jewish Homeland in Palestine, which Britain was at the time occupying in battles against Ottoman Empire troops in the First World War. The letter came to be known as the Balfour Declaration, which "set in train a process whereby colonisers would be treated as superior to the native population" (Cronin 2017: 4)[12]. In 1922, the declaration was reaffirmed in the League of Nations Mandate for Palestine (C. 529. M. 314. 1922. VI.), which officially recognized British control over Palestine, something that in practice had been the reality since the partition of the Ottoman Empire after the end of the war, in accordance with the now infamous Sykes-Picot Agreement negotiated between Britain and France in 1916. For the Zionist movement, the Balfour Declaration and the beginning of the British mandate provided colonial backing for building the Jewish homeland, whereas for Palestinians they represented the beginning of the international community's support for the Zionist project at their expense (e.g. Cronin 2017; Said 1979).

The Jewish population of Mandate Palestine had been growing steadily since the beginning of the 20th century[13] due to emigration from Europe, but it was only after the end of the Second World War and the atrocities of the Holocaust that the plans for founding a Jewish state were put into action. In 1947, when the United Kingdom made an announcement on terminating its mandate over Palestine, the United Nations took control and started to prepare a plan for partitioning the area between its Palestinian inhabitants and the existing and prospective Jewish population. In May 1947, the United Nations Special Committee on Palestine (UNSCOP) was created after Britain requested that the United Nations take on the task. The committee presented a report (A/364) to the General Assembly on 9 September 1947, in which it proposed terminating the mandate and put forward two suggestions for the partition: a plan for partition with economic union, also known as the majority proposal creating two states, and a federal state plan, the minority proposal that would have established a single state.

An Ad Hoc Committee was established to consider the two proposals, and later in the same month the General Assembly passed Resolution 181 (A/RES/1818[II]),

which recommended advancing the partition in line with the majority proposal, giving little serious consideration to the single-state option (Cohen 1982: 284). Consequently, Mandatory Palestine was to be divided into three sovereignties: a Jewish state that would comprise 56 percent of the land; Jerusalem as a separate zone under international administration; and the rest of the land, around 43 percent, which would house the state for Palestinian Arabs (Falah 1997: 314). The Arab League and the Arab Higher Committee boycotted the negotiations on the partition that took place in the United Nations Special Committee for Palestine after their inquiries on the matter were not taken into consideration (Khalidi 1997). The partition plan that was passed in the UN General Assembly clearly favored the Jewish state that was to be established. Palestinians, who at the time made up two thirds of the population, were to get less than half of the land, and the majority of this was less fertile than the heavily cultivated coastal areas. The Jewish minority constituted just 31 percent of the population in 1945 and owned less than six percent of the land in 1943[14].

But before the plan proposed by UNSCOP could be implemented violent confrontations broke out. By the end of 1947, Zionist forces had already begun a campaign to empty Palestinian villages and other Palestinian residential areas. In the December, orders were given to the Zionist forces regarding how to react to possible resistance and how to carry out retaliation against the Palestinian economy and its villages and infrastructure. It was stressed that the attacks "should strike the Arab rear in order to undermine the Arab sense of security" (Khalidi 1988: 20).

It is clear that the expulsions of the Palestinian population did not take place in the heat of the moment. The aim to create a Jewish state with as small an Arab population as possible was a recurring part of the discussions among the more militant members of the heterogeneous Zionist movement (Khalidi 1988; Masalha 1991). For example, the first director of the Jewish National Fund's Land Settlement Department, Yosef Weitz, wrote in his diary in 1940 that

> [i]t must be clear that there is no room in the country for both people […] If the Arabs leave it, the country will become wide and spacious for us […] The only solution is a Land of Israel […] without Arabs […] There is no way but to transfer the Arabs from here to the neighbouring countries, to transfer all of them, perhaps with the exception of Bethlehem, Nazareth and the old Jerusalem. Not one village must be left, not one tribe. (Weitz 1940, quoted in Masalha 2012: 6)

In April 1948, Zionist paramilitary forces started to execute Plan Dalet[15], the blueprint adopted in early March that introduced a plan for the expulsion of Palestinians from those areas designated for the Jewish state in the UN Partition

Plan (on the drafting of Plan Dalet, see Pappé 2006b: 39–125). By the time the Arab countries had declared war and interfered militarily after the mandate officially ended on May 15 and Israel declared independence, 250 000 Palestinians had already been dispossessed (Pappé 2006b: 40).

Attacks, intimidation, bombardment, and massacres[16] shook the Palestinian communities and made them fear for their safety. Many fled, fearing that massacres, such as that which took place on April 9 in the village of Deir Yassin – where more than a hundred residents were killed by Zionist paramilitary Irgun and Levi fighters (McGowan & Hogan 1999) – might reach their own villages and neighborhoods. Some were actively expelled by Zionist paramilitary forces who attacked villages and emptied then at gunpoint (Abu-Sitta 2010: 108–116). Some villages surrendered and evacuated on a promise from the Zionist forces that they would be allowed to return after the fighting ceased, a promise that was not, in most cases, kept (see Gandolfo 2017: 4–6). By the end of 1948, the just-established state of Israel had conquered areas way beyond the borders designated for the Jewish state in the UN-approved Partition Plan and had effectively displaced at least 80 percent of the Palestinian population (Abu-Lughod & Sa'di 2007: 3).

When the fighting ceased, 531 Palestinian villages and eleven urban neighborhoods had been emptied (Abu-Sitta 2010; Pappé 2006b). Close to 800 000 Palestinians were driven from their homes. The majority found their way to the surrounding countries – or were left behind newly enforced borders, having fled to the parts of Mandatory Palestine that became known as the West Bank and the Gaza Strip – and some became internally displaced[17] (Wakim 2001). All the displaced were prevented from returning to their previous homes. For example, in al-Walaja, a village near Jerusalem from where some of my interlocutors in the West Bank originated, the border drawing and enforcement exemplify how people were arbitrarily divided in the aftermath of Nakba. The village was split by the 1949 armistice line, known as the Green Line. The built-up part of the village, which was left on the Israeli side of the line, was emptied and later destroyed but some of those who were expelled stayed in the remaining part, on the approximately 30 percent of village lands that remained on the Jordanian side of the new border. Some of the villagers ended up living in the caves previously used as agricultural stores, while some ended up in the camps that were established in the West Bank. All were recognized as refugees, even those who resettled on the villages' lands and thus were "born as refugee in their own village" (Joronen 2019: 7).

During the first years after Nakba the majority of Palestinian villages were either partly or fully demolished (Morris 2004: 342) and, in several places, forests were

planted on top of them, which for their part rendered return infeasible by erasing the material basis of dwelling (e.g. Järvi 2019). Those who crossed the border from the surrounding countries in an attempt to return to their villages were treated as infiltrators, and many lost their lives (Fischbach 2003: 75–76; Korn 2003). The Absentees' Property Law (Knesset 5710-1950), passed in 1950, was used to confiscate the refugees' land and other assets. The same fate was faced by the internally displaced: they were labeled "present absentees" and thus the law could be applied to their property as well. The Law of Return (Knesset 5710-1950) grants all Jews emigrating to Israel automatic citizenship, while the return of Palestinian refugees continues to be denied till today[18].

In the upheaval caused by Nakba, people became separated from their family members, as some stayed in the areas that became Israel or left in different directions than their relatives. Farid, living in El Buss camp in Lebanon, noted that he did not have a large extended family in Lebanon precisely because his father was the only one of his siblings who fled to Lebanon during Nakba. Farid was born in Ein El Hilweh camp, where his parents and most of his siblings still lived but, as with the majority of Palestinian refugees, his family was dispersed. He had relatives in Jordan and his sister's daughter had just recently traveled to Greece, while his uncles and aunts had stayed in Palestine as internally displaced persons and were currently living there with Israeli citizenship. Farid had no contact with them, as the connection had been severed by Nakba and had not been re-established even when technological progress had made this possible (see Aouragh 2011 on re-established).

The situation of Farid's family exemplifies the scattering effect that Nakba had on the Palestinian community and, even today, Nakba continues to be the most significant event in the dispersal of Palestinians to different countries. The oral histories of the displaced Palestinians have illuminated not only what happened in Palestine during Nakba but also how people experienced their dispossession beyond the borders of Palestine and how they were received in their new environments (see Sayigh 1979; *Journal of Palestine Studies* 1988). Rosemary Sayigh, one of the first scholars to have recorded such oral histories, describes the shock experienced by those who fled from Palestine:

> There should be a Tolstoy at hand to describe the *hijra* [emigration], a leaderless trek of thousands of dazed and panic-stricken villagers, their bundles of bedding dropping by the wayside, families separated, old people dying of exhaustion, children carrying younger children, babies dying of dehydration. Survivors remember eating grass and drinking their own urine (it was high summer when the majority left). Settled peasants, many of whom had never been outside their sub-district, they were suddenly expelled into an

alien world in which others would look upon them as different, threatening, or even contemptible: "refugees", "displaced persons", "strangers". (Sayigh 1979: 104)

There are many similarities in people's accounts of the events, of how they left and in which direction, how they were shocked by the bad conditions and unwelcoming treatment, and how they did not settle in the first place to which their journey took them but often traveled from one place to another, even several times, before moving to a camp or settling in a city.

Abdul, whom I met in Burj Shemali camp, told me about his family's journey to the camp from al-Khalisa, a village near the Lebanese border that was destroyed and later replaced by the Israeli town of Kiryat Shmona. His parents first settled in the Lebanese village of Marj'ayoun, where he was born a couple of years later. Marj'ayoun is near the border of Lebanon and Israel/Palestine and also close to the village from which they had fled. The proximity of al-Khalisa made it possible for people to cross the border to tend their lands, harvest their crops, and bring food back to those who had stayed in Marj'ayoun. When Abdul was four years old, in 1954, his family moved to Tyre, and first lived by the sea before being moved, together with other Palestinians, to Burj Shemali camp. Those who were settled in camps were mainly from a peasant background, as was Abdul's family who had lands and orchards in al-Khalisa, whereas those who were from urban areas and had both a higher level of education and movable capital were more likely to find their new homes among the urban middle class of the host countries.

Narrating Nakba

The history of Nakba has long been silenced in Israel, and it continues to be so, with, among other things, the so-called Nakba law that allows the Finance Minister to reduce state funding or support if an organization commemorates "Israel's Independence Day or the day on which the state was established as a day of mourning" (Knesset 5745–1985 [amd. No. 40] 5771–2011, on remembering Nakba in Israel, see Lentin 2010). The opening up of Israel's military archives in the late 1970s and the work of the so-called new historians has, however, challenged the long-held silence on the course of events by bringing forth evidence of the systematic expulsion of Palestinians. One such historian is Benny Morris, who in 1988 published his seminal book *The Birth of the Palestinian Refugee Problem* (a revised edition was published in 2004). Morris was the first to systematically describe the events of

1948 from the perspective of Zionist military operations, and through archival material that showed that the reasons for the Palestinians' flight were not merely fear and orders from Arab states, as had previously been claimed, but expulsions implemented by Zionist militias.

Yet, despite his archival findings, Morris has maintained that the dispossession of Palestinians was merely a side effect of the fighting that ravaged the area, rather than being intentional and systematically implemented actions, a position that has been criticized by other historians (see Khalidi 1988; Masalha 1991; Pappé 2006b: xv). *The Ethnic Cleansing of Palestine*, a book by Israeli historian Ilan Pappé (2006b), claims the opposite and elaborates the process of drafting the blueprint of the expulsions, known as Plan Dalet, and the military operations that implemented it. Also leaning on archival material, Pappé proposes that the events of 1948 were deliberate and well-planned operations that aimed to ethnically cleanse the areas of their native Palestinian population in order to create a state with a clear Jewish majority.

The discussions initiated by the work of 'the new historians' have challenged the Zionist discourse on the events that took place in the months preceding and following the establishment of Israel, though they have not been influential enough to entirely replace it. However, though the work of the new historians has increased the understanding of the event that took place in 1948, to consider their work as revelatory would mean disregarding Palestinian and other Arab voices altogether. Even before the opening up of the Israeli archives, Palestinian academics, authors, and individual refugees had discussed the topic and written both autobiographies and academic publications on the events of 1948. Several Palestinian and other Arab academics had already taken Nakba under their scrutiny in the first two decades after 1948, one of them being Palestinian historian Walid Khalidi, who is also a co-founder of The Institute of Palestine Studies established in 1963 (Masalha 2012: 213–214).

The term *Nakba* (catastrophe) originates from one of these scholars: in 1949, historian Constantine Zurayk published a book entitled *Ma'na al-Nakba* (*The Meaning of the Disaster*) from which the term was adopted into common use (Masalha 2012: 10). In addition to archival material, the testimonies of Palestinians, who experienced the expulsions, and of Israeli soldiers, who executed the operations against Palestinian villages and city centers, have shed light on the events of 1948. Oral histories have informed us about how Nakba was experienced by those who lived through it (for a review of scholars working with Palestinian oral histories, see Masalha 2012: 15–18; see also Abdo & Masalha 2018; Humphries 2005; 'Issa 2005). Furthermore, Palestinians living in refugee camps have gathered information on

their native villages and published village histories that tell of their life before Nakba and the event that led to their dispossession (Davis 2011).

For the first generation of refugees, the generation of Nakba, it was the past lived in Palestine that formed the core of their identity. The future was to return to the lands in Palestine and continue life as it was before 1948. As mentioned, many even risked their lives when crossing the borders to tend their crops and orchards, as Israeli border guards shot those trying to reach their lands. It was imagined that the return would take place within years, and the past of Palestine was clear in people's memories. Palestinian writer Fawaz Turki, who himself was born in Haifa a few years before Nakba, describes the centrality of the past to those who had built their lives in Palestine before the beginning of exile:

> To my parents' generation the present was insanity. Not a natural continuum of what was. The only way they could relate to it was to transform it into an arrested past, governed by Palestinian images, rites, rituals, and dreams. That was the only way to impose harmony on their daily life, which terrorized them. They looked at themselves in the mirror of the past, for had they looked at the present the mirror would have been cracked. The image of their reality blurred. (Turki 1988: 33)

The Palestine of the past was ever-present. Yet, in the first years following Nakba, the trauma experienced by those dispossessed was too strong for them to utilize the memory for nationalist purposes (Abu-Lughod & Sa'di 2007). It took a generation to transform the exile into a political consciousness, and since the 1960s it has been an inseparable part of expressing Palestinianess and Palestinians' political struggle, not least because the current Palestinian political parties and the resistance movement were formed in exile. Retaining old keys that represent a link to the lost properties, commemorating the land and affirming ownership based on Ottoman land deeds, narrating experiences of Nakba and of life prior to the expulsions, and other forms of reproducing the memory take place both in Israel/Palestine and in exile.

The devastation experienced during Nakba and its consequences have followed Palestinians from 1948 onward, and the year is considered to be a point of rupture that redefined and enforced the crystallization of Palestinian national identity. It resulted not only in a spatial transformation of Palestine and Palestinian communities, but also in a comprehensive restructuring of the way of life: a society of peasants was transformed into a society of refugees. It posited a future that radically broke with the past (Opitz & Tellman 2015), creating the reality of the exile and placing Palestinians yet again under sovereigns they had, and continue to have,

no control over. Palestinian scholar Omar Dajani (2005: 42) has stressed the centrality of Nakba for the Palestinians as a people, by highlighting how

> [t]he *nakba* is the experience that has most defined Palestinian history. For Palestinians, it is not merely a political event – the establishment of the state of Israel on 78 percent of the territory of the Palestine Mandate – or even, primarily, a humanitarian one – the creating of the modern world's most enduring refugee problem. The *nakba* is of existential significance to Palestinians, representing both the shattering of the Palestinian community in Palestine and the consolidation of a shared national consciousness.

Nakba represents the loss of a homeland, the disintegration of a society, the frustration of national aspirations, and the start of a rapid destruction of Palestinian culture (Sa'di 2002). Yet, at the same time it is the knot that ties Palestinians together and upholds their sense of identity as a single nation; it is what helps in creating "a holistic Palestinian identity" in the words of a Palestinian working with the internally displaced who I met in 2016. Nakba forms "the point of reference" (Abu-Lughod & Sa'di 2007: 5) for events that preceded and followed it, and though it is increasingly approached as an ongoing process rather than as history fixed to the year 1948 (see Abdo & Masalha 2018), it nevertheless is the single most significant point in the trajectories of Palestinian refugee communities, from which the dispersal of experiences erupted. It also forms the beginning of something that still prevails, namely Palestinians' existence as a refugee nation.

4.2   The evolvement of refugee spatialities

In 1948 at least 80 percent of Palestinians were displaced and made refugees. This displacement from historical Palestine not only was a matter of being transferred from one place to another but, as has already been discussed, meant that a way of life ceased to exist: the loss of land restructured the whole lifeworld of peasants, who formed the majority of those who settled in the refugee camps. In the host countries the trajectories of the Palestinian refugees rapidly started to unroll in different directions, as the local conditions and social structurings as well as political decision-making affected the ways in which Palestinian refugees were positioned.

In his book *After the Last Sky: Palestinian Lives* (1993), Edward Said asks "whether a clear direct line can be drawn from our misfortunes in 1948 to our misfortunes in the present" (Said 1993: 5). His answer is no, and he continues that "no clear and simple narrative is adequate to the complexity of our experience". To understand

Palestinians' refugeeness, one must not only be familiar with the year 1948 and its significance to Palestinians, but also understand the differences as well as the similarities in the refugee contexts. The everyday and the personal experiences are molded by the exile. The camps have accumulated materialities and histories that tell of the lives that have unfolded in them, of the lives that Palestinian refugees have built for themselves. Though UNRWA and PLO have formed an institutional frame that has tied the refugee communities together, as has the political struggle and the Palestinian identification on a more general level, there are still considerable differences in the histories of Palestinian refugees in different countries.

Being familiar with the complex, diverging, and overlapping histories of Palestinians in the host countries is crucial in understanding the distinct social and political realities that define the positions Palestinian refugees occupy today. It is thus important to consider how the present-day conditions have come into being and which are the historically evolved events and processes against which Palestinian refugees contemplate their possibilities for the future. My aim here is not to provide a comprehensive history of each site, which would not even be possible within the scope of this work, but to elaborate those events, ruptures and continuities that I consider to be the most central in forming the contexts – in other words, the relational formations of spaces that include the historical, political, material, social, economic, and legislative dimensions that frame life – that define Palestinian refugees' present and future, and which I consider to be helpful in increasing the hermeneutic understanding of the Palestinian refugee condition(s).

Creating the refugee status

In December 1948, the United Nations Conciliation Commission for Palestine (UNCCP) was created by way of Resolution 194[19]. In the same General Assembly resolution, the UN recognized Palestinians' right to return to their former places of dwelling, with the following lines:

> the refugees wishing to return to their homes and live at peace with their neighbours should be permitted to do so at the earliest practicable date, and that compensation should be paid for the property of those choosing not to return and for loss of or damage to property which, under principles of international law or in equity, should be made good by the Governments or authorities responsible. (A/RES/194 [III])

Resolution 194 is often referred to by Palestinians as international recognition of their inalienable right to return to their pre-Nakba urban areas and villages. The responsibility of the UNCCP was to facilitate return, resettlement, and the payment of compensation, but in the progress reports submitted by the commission during 1949 (A/819, A/838, A/927, A/992, A/1252) it had already become evident that reaching a political solution to the refugee situation would not be an easy task. Israel was not willing to comply with the repatriation and, as the years have gone by, the pressure from the international community for it to do so has only diminished.

Though several decades have passed without the implementation of the decrees stipulated in Resolution 194, the right of return (*ḥaq al-'awda*) continues to be the political claim of the refugees and it has in many ways affected the present conditions in exile. In Israel, on the other hand, the implementation of the return is presented as 'an existential threat' that would compromise the Jewish nature of the country by enabling the emergence of a Palestinian majority. The denial of the return of Palestinians exemplifies how rights in Israel are distributed on a religious basis[20]: Jews all over the world are entitled to 'return' to Israel (do *aliyah*) and acquire citizenship instantly on arrival, whereas a large number of Palestinian refugees are not entitled to even visit the places from which their families fled in 1948. For the settler colonial project of Israel, Palestinian refugees are those "who are permanently restricted from entering the settler locale" (Veracini 2010: 20), because the very basis of Israel as a Jewish state rests upon the exclusion of those expelled – a process that Patrick Wolfe calls the elimination of the native (Wolfe 2006) – in line with the aspiration to create a Jewish majority and conditions in which the settlers can dominate.

When a political solution was not reached during the first years of exile, the urgency of catering for the humanitarian needs of the dispossessed Palestinians arose. Hence, Palestinians began to be issued an internationally recognized refugee status in 1950 when the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East, UNRWA, started up its operations. Before UNRWA was founded, Palestinians received relief assistance from numerous charities and humanitarian organizations, such as the Red Cross, which were financially assisted by United Nations Relief for Palestine Refugees (UNRPR), established in November 1948 to address the refugees' needs. By way of UN Resolution 302 (A/RES/302 [IV]), issued in December 1949, UNRWA was established and its mandate defined, and a more organized aid distribution began, which required the registration of those entitled to assistance.

This registration of Palestinians refugees was thus based on UNRWA's humanitarian relief mandate, and resulted in not all those who had fled from Palestine obtaining official refugee status as only those in need of assistance were registered. Furthermore, the temporally multi-layered and continuous displacement of Palestinians means that there is a large number of Palestinians dispossessed of their homes who are not officially counted as Palestinian refugees, even when they de facto are. UNRWA-issued refugee status is hence not a full account of Palestinian loss and displacement, as we have been reminded by Ilana Feldman, because it has never included the whole population that had claims to property, to return, and to national self-determination (Feldman 2012b: 392).

The refugee camps that are at the center of this research were gradually formed after 1948 and providing services within them came to be UNRWA's responsibility, while the duty of administering or policing them remained with the host state. UNRWA remained as an independent agency even after the establishment of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) in 1950 and is thus the only functioning UN agency that attends to the needs of a single refugee community. Furthermore, the refugee status issued by UNRWA is inherited, which is why the number of registered Palestinian refugees has increased rather than decreased over the years. The passing on of the refugee status follows the same logic as that of citizenship in the majority of states in the Middle East and North Africa, meaning that it follows the male lineage. Refugee women are not able to pass on the UNRWA status to their children or spouses, and even the status of women married to non-refugee men has been ambiguous with regard to getting support from the agency (see Feldman 2012b). In some cases, if the self-sufficiency of the family had improved to the extent that they were no longer in need of assistance from the agency, the children were not necessarily registered with UNRWA, which again deprived them of the right to register later on. This has been the case especially in Jordan, where Jordanian citizenship provides the basic security needed, as will be discussed in the following chapters.

Nevertheless, the hereditary nature of the refugee status has meant that the number of refugees recognized by UNRWA had risen from the approximately 750 000 Palestinians who crossed state borders in 1948 and were issued refugee status to more than six million by December 2019[21]. The majority of those who experienced Nakba ended up living the rest of their lives in exile without seeing the return, and it is a clear minority of those who presently dwell in the refugee camps who have seen their ancestral home villages. For the majority today, everyday life has always been in the refugee camps or in the urban areas of the host countries. Though

the relation to Palestine has persisted through commemorative practices (e.g. Khalili 2007) and political struggle, Palestine has become an abstract geography for the majority of refugees who are unable to access present-day Israel/Palestine.

Outlaws in a sectarian society: Palestinian refugees in Lebanon

When Nakba took place in 1948, Lebanon had been independent for less than five years. After the fall of the Ottoman Empire in the First World War, this small country on the Mediterranean coast was created with its present borders under the French mandate to which it was designated in the Sykes-Picot Agreement, and in 1943 it became a self-ruling, sovereign state. Since independence, Lebanon has been a republic built on sectarian affiliations[22], meaning that religious belonging structures the power division in the decision-making bodies of the country. It is this sectarian structuring of Lebanon that has most comprehensively determined the position of Palestinians. It includes 18 recognized religious sects, the largest of which are Sunni Muslims, Shia Muslims, and Maronite Christians.

The aforementioned three groups have been the main power holders, but their relative power positions have varied, both in number and in practice. In recent decades the Shia parties have strengthened, with Hezbollah at the forefront, before which, during and after the Lebanese civil war, it was the Sunnis who had the political momentum. However, in the years after independence, it was the Maronite Christians who had the strongest hold, reflecting the political favoritism under the colonial rules of both the Ottomans and the French. The actual size of each sect is a delicate matter, and no official census has been implemented since 1932. Given this context, the arrival of nearly 110 000 mainly Sunni Muslim Palestinians was not welcomed with open arms and anthropologist Rosemary Sayigh has noted that

> Lebanon's sect/class system was reflected in every aspect of the situation of the refugees: their legal status, the zoning of the camps, mechanisms of control, and modes of integration into the political and economic system. (Sayigh 2015: 15)

The presence of Palestinian refugees was, and still is, framed as interfering with the delicate power balances between the different religious groups. Nevertheless, very early on many Palestinian Christians we given Lebanese citizenship and, subsequently, a small number of Palestinians from other religious backgrounds have also gained it, though the numbers are not publicly shared (PHRO 2008). However, the vast majority of Palestinians have remained stateless, and the lack of citizenship,

and particularly the rights associated with it, has made Lebanon the most difficult place in which to be a Palestinian refugee. Even my interlocutors in the West Bank and Jordan often stressed this, when it came up that I had been doing fieldwork in Lebanon.

Palestinians who fled to Lebanon were mainly from the geographically close northern parts of Mandatory Palestine, from the districts of Acre, Safad, and Haifa (Abu-Sitta 2010: 24). Many Palestinians from those areas already had personal relations with their northern neighbor, as kinship ties as well as economic connections existed between Palestinians and Lebanese before the violent rupturing in the region forced Palestinians to cross the border. Furthermore, as in other parts of the region, the borders were rather blurred and porous, and some villages in the border region were disputed between Lebanese and Palestinian territories. Among these was the village that my key interlocutor Asma's family was from, and hence they already had Lebanese citizenship when they became refugees.

The first years in Lebanon passed in overcoming the shock and the reordering of lives caused by Nakba, and in adapting to the new situation. Initially refugees believed that they would be able to return promptly, and hence projects seen as aiming to settle them into their new locales were fiercely opposed (al-Husseini 2000; Feldman 2008). Abu Samir, who was born before Nakba in 1934, recollected this opposition toward resettlement in his own family history. His parents had found their way from Palestine to Anjar in the Beqaa Valley, and he told me that his family had refused to accept the cows and chicken that were offered to them because they were still waiting to return to their hometown near Nazareth. Owning livestock would have signaled an intention to stay in Lebanon. Though UNRWA's work program was opposed (see al-Husseini 2000), it was not, however, possible to refuse to work altogether, as survival in the new environment required income. Abu Samir recollected how they had first lived in the Beqaa Valley in eastern Lebanon and had earned their living as day laborers on an onion farm. After a while the landowner refused to pay them and when there was a confrontation with him the family left Anjar and traveled to the coast, to Tyre. For Abu Samir this had felt like another expulsion but, in the end, the salaries were better in Tyre and there were better services and opportunities for schooling, so they settled in Burj Shemali camp and continued their lives there. He also felt that it was easier to be a Palestinian in the south because the local Lebanese there knew about Palestine and Palestinians, the culture was similar, and there were no problems like those in Anjar.

During the first decades in exile, the situation in the camps was aggravated by close surveillance by Lebanese security forces that placed restrictions on, for

example, refugees' freedom of movement: those living in camps were required to obtain a permit from the Lebanese military agency if they wanted to venture between the camps (Sayigh 1979: 133–134; see also Ramadan & Fregonese 2017; Sanyal 2010, 2014). The situation changed when PLO was created in 1964 during the Palestinian National Council's first meeting. The National Council decided to set up these armed forces to fight for the liberation of Palestine. Life in the camps especially improved after the Palestinian resistance movement gained more strength, which changed the situation both socially and economically. Standing up to Israel created a sense of national pride and the presence of resistance created employment opportunities for the refugees, in the resistance forces themselves but also in the social sector, as the PLO engaged extensively with fields that had previously been shouldered only by UNRWA (see Rubenberg 1983: 18–27).

In 1969, authority over the camps was transferred from the Lebanese Armed Forces to the PLO in the Cairo Agreement[23]. Negotiated between the PLO and the Lebanese army, the agreement set out the terms for the presence of Palestinian guerilla forces in Lebanon and transferred the refugee camps from the control of the Lebanese army's Deuxième Bureau to the Palestinian forces (Cobban 1984: 47–48). The agreement made the lives of refugees in Lebanon easier by facilitating better access to the employment market, ensuring freedom of movement, and forming Popular Committees in the camps to look after the interests of refugees residing in them. Furthermore, the agreement approved the establishment of Palestinian Armed Struggle posts and agreed that attacks against Israel could be executed from Lebanese soil. Due to this power division, camps governed by the PLO have been described as "states within a state" (Stel 2016), and Palestinian factions have formed one of the many sovereigns present in Lebanon.

The heyday of Palestinian resistance in Lebanon intensified when Palestinian *fedayeen*, the resistance fighters, and their leadership were stationed to the country in 1970[24], marking the start of "the days of the revolution" (*ayyam al-thawra*) (Peteet 2005). Even before their relocation, Palestinian fighters had implemented guerilla operations against Israel across Lebanon's southern border in accordance with the Cairo Agreement, which had raised fear among the Lebanese of retaliation by Israel. By the time the Lebanese civil war broke out in 1975, Palestinian fighters formed a significant military power, which had antagonized the country's Christian factions in particular (Cobban 1984: 63–67). The starting point of the civil war is, in fact, considered to have been an attack against a bus transporting Palestinian refugees in southern Beirut, executed by Maronite Christian Phalange militia.

The recurring violence that has characterized the last half century of Lebanon's history has radically shaped the social, political, and material landscapes of the country and thereby also the conditions in which Palestinians currently dwell. Palestinian fighters were centrally involved in the Lebanese civil war, which was a complex web of conflicts between multiple Lebanese militias of confessional and ideological origin, with changing alliances and backing from abroad, who fought amid external interferences. The Palestinian population as a whole suffered greatly at the hands of other militias. The first such atrocity against civilians took place in the second year of the war, when Christian militias first besieged the Palestinian camp of Tel al-Zaatar, near downtown Beirut, after which they massacred more than 1000 of its residents and finally destroyed the camp. The most well-known of the attacks against Palestinian civilians is the massacre of Sabra-Shatila on September 16, 1982, executed by the Maronite Christian faction, the Phalangists, with the support of Israeli military forces. During the civil war, three camps were destroyed (Al-Nabatiyah al-Tahta, Tel al-Zaatar, and Jisr al-Basha) and fighting and sieges ravaged the majority of the rest.

Israel was one of the external players in the civil war and it particularly targeted the Palestinians refugee camps. In 1978, Israel briefly occupied southern Lebanon up to the Litani River. Palestinian fighters were imprisoned, and the PLO withdrew to the unoccupied parts of the country. The second, and longer, Israeli occupation of southern Lebanon started in 1982 and had more far-reaching consequences for Palestinians, as the PLO was forced to retreat from Lebanon altogether. Those living in the occupied south faced violence and suppression from both the Israelis and the Lebanese militias, who continued fighting. The last years of the civil war also witnessed a sub-conflict from 1984 to 1987, known as the War of the Camps, during which Palestinian refugee camps were sieged and attacked by the Shia militia Amal (for more detailed accounts, see Peteet 2005: 151–155; Sayigh 2015). That period greatly affected the Palestinian population as a whole; Abu Samir from Burj Shemali told me that though the Israelis arrested the fighters, Amal targeted everyone.

The occupation of the south by Israel lasted from 1982 till 2000 and it changed life in the camps also in those parts of Lebanon that were not directly affected by the presence of the Israel Defense Forces (IDF). The PLO was forced to flee the country when the occupation started, and the political leadership led by Yasser Arafat relocated to Tunisia and Syria, depending on their political affiliation. The resistance force had been a major player in the camps, both as a source of national pride and a provider of services and employment opportunities. Its withdrawal not only left the camps in a state of political stagnation and created a sense of

abandonment (Peteet 2005), but it left them under-protected, as the massacre in Shatila, which took place only two weeks after the Palestinian resistance had fled the country, exemplifies.

The civil war came to an end in 1990 with the Taif Agreement that was signed and ratified the previous year. The agreement provided the basis for ending the war and initiated a return to political normalcy accompanied by political rearrangements (Krayem 1997). The country, nonetheless, continued to be occupied by Syria (1976–2005) and Israel (1982–2000, south Lebanon), and the end of the war did not bring it lasting stability, something that has naturally also affected the Palestinians. Rather, the country's residents seem to be constantly waiting for the next round of violence to emerge (Hermez 2017), in recent years this fear being directed at the seemingly inevitable spillover of the Syrian civil war into Lebanon. Historian Andrew Arsan has described the lingering presence of experienced violence in the minds of the Lebanese:

> Disintegrating, destructive violence of the kind that tore the country apart from 1975 to 1990 is always felt as an immanent presence, a haunting of the present, like a chronic ache carried around in the body that flares up at moments of tension and stress. (Arsan 2018: 152)

These memories have repeatedly flared up as both internal and external political developments have escalated into armed conflict and violence, the Israeli military assault in 2006 – the so-called July War – being the most devastating in terms of the number of casualties and the material destruction it wrecked. Furthermore, decades after the end of the civil war, and the much-criticized process of reconstruction (Arsan 2018: 214–215), the material marks of fighting are present in the urban landscapes of Lebanon: bombed buildings and houses full of bullet holes can be found everywhere, but especially in the more impoverished neighborhoods, the camps among them.

Though the Cairo Agreement was annulled in 1987, in practice Palestinian camps have stayed outside the sovereign power of the state, which has left them in a rather precarious position and created them as safe havens for clandestine factions. The Lebanese army still does not usually enter them, an exception being the fighting in Naher el-Bared in 2007, when battles between the Lebanese military and Fatah al-Islam militants left much of the camp destroyed (see Ramadan 2009b). The camps do have Palestinian security forces, but every now and then clashes still erupt, especially in the largest camp of Ein El Hilweh, which both Palestinian and Lebanese armed factions have infiltrated to escape the Lebanese security forces.

For the Palestinians, the social consequences of the civil war have also been considerable. Not only did the PLO's flight from the country and the experiences of the violence discompose the community, but Palestinians are also widely blamed for the outbreak of the war, which has clear consequences for how they are perceived today. This can be observed not only in relation to the civil war but also in the general tendency to present Palestinians as a threat (see Ali Nayel 2013).

Palestinian refugees have to a degree internalized this assumption that they will be blamed for any violence facing the country, as became evident in November 2015 when a twin suicide bomb attack claimed by Isis shook Beirut's southern suburb of Burj Barajneh. This Shia neighborhood on the outskirts of the city houses a Palestinian refugee camp carrying the same name and, initially, it was claimed that one of the bombers was a Palestinian. This was fiercely denied by my interlocutors, who argued against the possibility by referring to the name of this attacker, which they claimed was one not found among Palestinians. The force with which the Palestinians I talked to denied the possibility of a Palestinian being involved in the suicide attack reflected the fear that were it to be proved it would create a backlash against the Palestinian community as a whole. A couple of assaults against Palestinians did, in fact, occur before the leader of Hezbollah, Hassan Nasrallah, stepped in with the reassurance that no Palestinian was involved in the attack that killed 43 and wounded hundreds in a busy commercial area of the party's stronghold.

Of my fields, Lebanon is the country that is the most comprehensively disconnected from Israel/Palestine. Recurring hostilities between Lebanon and Israel have led to a situation in which there is no diplomatic relationship between the countries, boycotting Israel is an official state policy, the violation of which can have legal consequences, and it is not possible to enter the country with an Israeli stamp in one's passport. Every now and then, there are prosecutions for collaborating with Israel, and allegations of spying have involved everything from wiretapping to a spying vulture[25]. The border region in southern Lebanon has been under UN peacekeeping mission UNIFIL since Israel first crossed the land border to Lebanon in 1978, and at present the southern border is a no-go zone for foreigners and Palestinians. Though relative calm has existed since the 2006 war that was inflicted due to Hezbollah capturing IDF soldiers by crossing over to Israel's side of the border, border violations by Israel are commonplace, and both sides, the parties usually being Hezbollah and members of the Israeli government, regularly threaten the other with violence.

What is telling of the relation between the two countries is that even on tourist maps in Lebanon the southern neighbor is named Palestine rather than Israel, and,

at the end of 2016, a small-scale social media outrage erupted because Lebanese television station MTV had on its weather forecast the name Israel instead of Palestine. In this context, maintaining relationships with relatives in Israel/Palestine has been difficult. In the 21st century, new forms of social media have enabled the renewal of contact with family on the other side of the border (see Aouragh 2011) – for example, my host family keep in touch with their aunt and cousins living in Nablus in the occupied West Bank via WhatsApp and Facebook – but any type of movement between Lebanon and Israel/Palestine remains impossible.

As has been mentioned, Palestinians in Lebanon were left stateless, a practice later legitimized by Arab League Resolution 1547 that called for maintaining the refugees' Palestinian nationality and thus the right to return to Palestine. Unlike in Syria, where statelessness was also maintained, in Lebanon Palestinian refugees were excluded from the economic life of the country. In 1950, a decision was passed which required Palestinians to acquire work permits, and in 1962 Palestinians' access to the employment market was further restricted by a law that classified Palestinians as foreigners and thus excluded them from several positions altogether (PHRO 2008: 37–41). In the so-called Casablanca Protocol[26], issued in 1965, the Arab states were required to provide Palestinian refugees with certain basic rights on a par with those of citizens, the right to employment among them, yet Lebanon has continued its policy of labor exclusion.

In practice, many foreigners have a better position in Lebanon's labor market than Palestinians who are born in the country because Palestinians' statelessness prevents them from working in professions that require citizenship. Furthermore, very few Palestinians actually acquire work permits (see table in PHRO 2008: 42), which means that in practice only manual labor and agricultural work, which do not require permits, are easily available to Palestinians. Though amendments made to the labor law in 2010 nominally improved the position of Palestinians in labor markets, these changes were treated as meaningless gestures (PHRO 2010), and limited access to employment continues to be a major cause of deprivation and frustration[27]. For those with higher education, the opportunities provided by UNRWA, and at one point also by the Palestinian resistance, were the only options for accessing work in their own field.

As a result of the country's turbulent history, present-day Lebanon is notorious for its weak central governance, caused by the sectarian power divisions and further aggravated by the political reality since the civil war (see Arsan 2018). The lack of functional and unified governance has created arbitrary practices and mistrust of the state, and has also affected the situation in the Palestinian camps, which are outside

state control and thus easily infiltrated by clandestine groups. A common behavior among those living in the country – Lebanese, Palestinian, and foreigners alike – is to explain everything by stating "this is Lebanon" or "welcome to Lebanon", indicating that it is simply part of the country's fabric that everyday life means electricity and water shortages, garbage crises, and corruption and nepotism among politicians. It is a widely shared understanding that the Lebanese political elite is more interested in maintaining their own position than furthering the general good of the country. The position of Palestinians in the country is largely defined by different forms of rightlessness and exclusion. They have experienced violence and multiple displacement, and they are placed on the edges of society. Due to limited ownership rights (see Hanafi et al. 2012), the majority of Palestinians continue to dwell in the camps or in unofficial gatherings in crowded and vulnerable conditions. Refugees' position in the employment markets is extremely precarious (e.g. Hanafi & Tiltnes 2008), and their treatment continues to be colored by mistrust and scorn.

Though the Palestinian case is often used by Lebanese politicians in attacking Israel, in practice no political party in Lebanon is willing to put the rights of Palestinians on their agenda. *Tawteen* (naturalization) is widely opposed, not only by Lebanese political groups but also by Palestinians themselves, though they would be more than willing to receive the employment and ownership rights without the political citizenship. The demographic composition of the country remains a delicate issue and, though some Palestinians have received Lebanese citizenship since 1948, the great majority continue to be stateless with very few rights, which undermines their possibilities to build secure and stable lives in Lebanon.

At the same time, Palestinians have limited possibilities to leave the country because as stateless people they hold only a travel document issued by the Lebanese state, which makes obtaining visas difficult. This document was still written by hand at the time of my fieldwork[28], which further limited the possibilities as hand-written documents did not meet the safety requirements set by the International Civil Aviation Organization. Furthermore, the arrival of Syrian refugees – both Syrians and Syrian Palestinians – since the beginning of the conflict in 2011 has directed NGO funding away from the local Palestinian community and created competition between the two refugee communities for the scarce employment opportunities. All these factors together have created a situation in which the majority of Palestinians find it difficult to continue living in Lebanon, and many opt for emigration, as will be discussed further in the following chapters.

The manifold violence of colonial regimes: Palestinian refugees in the West Bank

Socially, the West Bank is a very different place for Palestinian refugees compared with Lebanon. At the same time, it is a place where the refugees' lives are rendered disposable to an entirely different extent because of the violent occupation that defines everyday life in its entirety. When the refugees of 1948 arrived in the West Bank, they did not consider that they were crossing a border: they were just traveling to another part of Mandatory Palestine, the areas that were supposed to be part of the Arab state designated in the UN partition plan. Yet, due to Jordanian involvement, those areas came to be known as the West Bank, as they constituted the western banks of the Jordan River. After the declaration of independence that Zionist leaders issued on the May 14, 1948 and the war against the surrounding Arab states that followed, the West Bank was occupied by Jordan and then finally annexed to it in 1950. The history of the West Bank as a separate entity is thus tightly connected to the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan. The annexation was opposed by the Arab League and the Palestinian political leadership, but it was nevertheless implemented, and any opposition was silenced. The previous year, the residents of the West Bank, both refugees and those who had lived there before 1948, were issued Jordanian citizenship. Due to this history, many older Palestinians living in the West Bank hold a Jordanian passport even today.

In the West Bank the increase in the population was not as drastic as in the Gaza Strip (where 80 000 local dwellers suddenly found themselves accompanied by almost 200 000 refugees) but the population still grew significantly, as 280 000 refugees were added to the population of 420 000 (UN 1994: 11). Even though these refugees stayed within Mandatory Palestine, their inclusion in the new living environment was not entirely unproblematic. The cities and towns of the West Bank were naturally connected to other parts of Mandatory Palestine through trade and kinship relations, but Palestinians from inside the 1948 borders were still treated as outsiders in the village and urban communities that had traditionally been built on family relations and clan connections (Bisharat 1997). The reception of the refugees was sometimes tinged with suspicion as refugees and their families were not known to the native West Bankers and could not be socially situated in the same manner as people whose families were known (Bisharat 1997: 214). There also used to be "a sort of racism" displayed toward the refugees, as Sari from Aida camp phrased it. He noted that the local Palestinians used to have the idea that the refugees must have sold their land to the Israelis and run away, which resulted in negative attitudes

among the local population. Sari, however, saw that these attitudes were more a thing of the past rather than something that still defined how the refugees were viewed. Nevertheless, during the first decades they affected the ways in which refugees were encountered, and some of those born in exile even blamed their parents and grandparent for their lack of *sumud*, for abandoning Palestine without a fight (Bisharat 1997: 214; Feldman 2018: 154–155; Peteet 2005: 148; Sayigh 2012).

After the West Bankers came under Jordanian rule, they were promptly integrated into the social and economic life of the new sovereign. The unity of the two banks of the river was asserted in speeches and statements before the annexation, and Jordan declared itself the rightful representative of the Palestinian people (Massad 2001: 224–227). At the same time, the Jordanization of Palestinians and the West Bank was enforced, and in textbooks West Bankers were referred to as Jordanians rather than Palestinians (Nasser 2005: 54). A separate Palestinian identity and Palestinian nationalism were not allowed to flourish, and the refugees' political activities were kept under surveillance, yet most Palestinians came to accept their new status as citizens of the kingdom (Massad 2001: 235).

Cut off from the important economic markets of the coastal parts of Mandatory Palestine, many traveled from the West Bank to the Jordanian capital Amman in search of better work opportunities, especially those refugees who had lost their lands and properties in Nakba (Rosenfeld 2004: 33–35). While discontent was expressed, for example toward privileging the East Bank in development projects (Massad 2001: 325–326) and political suppression (Sayigh 1979: 110, see also Hawa Tawil 1983: 75–78, 84–87), and while Palestinians saw Jordan as an occupying power (Abu-Odeh 1999: 57), major disturbances between Palestinians and their Transjordanian hosts did not erupt until Israel occupied the West Bank in 1967 (Abu-Odeh 1999: 105–107).

The Jordanian rule lasted nearly 20 years and it had lasting effects on the lives of West Bank Palestinians. Nevertheless, the most fundamental change to the living conditions of the refugees in the West Bank after 1948 was the Six-Day War in 1967 and the Israeli occupation that followed. The war inflicted a new wave of refugees as people fled from the West Bank to Jordan, many of those fleeing having already been displaced at Nakba. Those who stayed came under occupation and were placed under Israeli military orders. In Israel, the occupation was viewed, among other things, as an opportunity that "strengthened Jewish national identity and infused the expanding economy with a large pool of cheap labor and 'free' land" (Yiftachel & Yacobi 2006: 172).

The violent manifestations of occupation, whether physical, social, or economic, have been proficiently covered up by local civil society organizations (e.g. Addameer, BADIL, B'tselem, Breaking the Silence, al-Haq), scholars (numerous, e.g. Farsakh 2005; Gordon 2008; Shalhoub-Kevorkian 2015; Weizman 2007), and international actors (e.g. Human Rights Watch, different UN institutions). Refugees have suffered their fair share at the hands of the occupier and refugee camps have been a particular target of the occupying forces since 1967 (Masalha 2003: 68). In a similar manner to in the surrounding countries, refugee camps in the occupied West Bank have become centers of resistance, which has consequently made them places where the violence of the IDF is heavily concentrated. Furthermore, between 1967 and the early 2000s Israel introduced a dozen proposals for resettling refugees outside the camps and thus getting rid of the so-called refugee problem and the spaces they considered to be a threat. For the refugees, however, the occupation also meant that their ancestral villages were again within their reach, though only to visit. These visits were treated as pilgrimages and even equated to *hajj*, the Muslim pilgrimage to Mecca (Ben-Ze'ev & Aburaiya 2004), yet they also shattered the romanticized views on Palestine and the return (Bisharat 1997: 218–219). This possibility has, however, all but disappeared since Israel's permit regime has become stricter since the beginning of the Second Intifada (e.g. Berda 2017) and movement has been physically stalled by the separation wall, the construction of which was started in 2002[29].

From the beginning of the occupation, Israel started to settle its own Jewish citizens in the West Bank, East Jerusalem and the Gaza Strip (from where it withdrew its civilian population in 2005), in violation of the Fourth Geneva Convention. Lands were confiscated to construct the Jewish-only settlements, which continue to expand both in number and population, causing forced displacement and house demolitions, fragmenting the territory and depriving Palestinians of their livelihoods. Israel's way of presenting its settler colonial occupation varies according to the audience, and Oren Yiftachel and Haim Yacobi have stated that

> Israel has used an effective double discourse. Domestically it has presented the Palestinian occupied territories as part of the "eternal Jewish homeland," thereby including Jewish settlers in those territories as full state citizens, despite the fact that they live outside the official bounds of the state. At the same time, internationally, Israel has presented the same occupied territories as "temporarily administered," thereby excluding their Palestinian residents from political participation, leaving them powerless to shape the future of their own homeland. (Yiftachel & Yacobi 2006: 172)

The settlement policies have created a de facto apartheid regime as people residing side by side are treated unequally and placed under different jurisdictions (see Tilley 2012), with Palestinians being under permanent military rule while the Jewish settlers are full members of Israeli society and are granted rights accordingly. The settlement expansion in the West Bank, which in Israeli discourse is referred to as Judea and Samaria, has accelerated in the past decades, especially after the start of the so-called peace negotiations at the beginning of the 1990s. The dispossessions caused by Israel's settlement policies, together with other practices that have led to the forced displacement of Palestinians, have been referred to as "ongoing Nakba", to highlight the ongoing practices of dispossessing Palestinians of their lands from Nakba of 1948 till the present day[30]. By stressing the continuity of dispossession, activists aim to draw attention to the continuing nature of Israel's settler colonial practices by linking the experiences of those losing their land due to land confiscations with the dispossession experienced by the refugees several decades earlier.

Different forms of violence occur daily under the occupation, and the disposability of Palestinian lives is also evident during so-called calm periods, which reveals how the calmness is actually considered as such only from Israel's perspective. Every now and then this calm breaks, and the first such large-scale uprising since the beginning of the occupation was the First Intifada, which started in 1987. In 1988, the PLO issued a declaration of independence and during the same year Jordan dismantled the ties between the two banks and abandoned its claims to the West Bank in support of establishing a Palestinian state (Massad 2001: 260–262). This 1988 disengagement from the West Bank changed the status of West Bank Palestinians, who until then were entitled to full Jordanian citizenship when entering Jordan (Gabbay 2014).

The First Intifada was a popular uprising of mass demonstrations, civil disobedience, and strikes that brought together different sectors of Palestinian society in protest against the harsh occupation policies (King 2007). Refugee camps faced strong crackdowns, as they were raided, bombed, and put under curfew by the Israeli military in order to demobilize them as centers of resistance (see Collins 2004). Iconic pictures of children and youths facing Israeli tanks with stones in their hands epitomize the uprising, but also set it apart from the Second Intifada, which broke out at the turn of the millennium and was more violent, with suicide attacks and car bombs, and heavy and collective retaliation by Israel.

The First Intifada was brought to an end by the peace negotiations between Israeli and Palestinian representatives that were conducted in secret and resulted in the Declaration of Principles on Interim Self-Government Arrangements[31], generally

known as Oslo I. A few days after the signing of the agreement, the PLO officially recognized Israel's right to exist in peace and security, and thus effectively gave up its demands on the areas within the 1948 borders of Israel. The agreement led to the founding of PA and allowed a part of the Palestinian political leadership living in exile to 'return' to the West Bank to participate in the creation of the new governing body. The first Oslo Agreement was followed by the Israeli-Palestinian Interim Agreement on the West Bank and the Gaza Strip or, in other words, Oslo II[32]. This complementary agreement was signed in 1995 and its major consequence was the creation of the territorial zones known as Areas A, B, and C that still define the everyday lives of Palestinians living in the West Bank. Area A, at around 18 percent of the West Bank[33], consists of Palestinian towns and cities and is in principle under full Palestinian control and out of bounds for Israelis, though in practice it is regularly entered by the IDF. Area B consists of approximately 22 percent of the land and is under Palestinian civil administration and Israeli military control. Area C, on the other hand, comprises more than 60 percent of the land and is under full Israeli control. On this land lie the Israeli settlements, but also the majority of Palestinians' agricultural lands and some villages and refugee camps, which leaves these in an extremely precarious position.

The two agreements signed in the 1990s, usually merged under the title "Oslo", were meant to lead to the establishment of a Palestinian state in the areas occupied in 1967. The two key issues postponed till the final status negotiations were the fate of Jerusalem and the case of Palestinian refugees. Not surprisingly, the refugees felt that they had been left on their own, as did Palestinians living inside Israel, as both were left out of the PA's mandate. Furthermore, the recognition of Israel and the officially adoption of the two-state solution are in themselves considered a betrayal by some, because they entail disregarding the Palestinian villages and neighborhoods emptied in 1948.

For my interlocutors in the West Bank, Oslo forms a temporal division line between the time before and after it. The agreement is blamed for obscuring the common goal and enhancing the individualization of the Palestinian community by creating an elite that is closely intertwined with the Palestinian Authority. Munir, an active member of the refugee community in Dheisheh camp, recognized that Oslo had made the situation better in that it had distanced the occupation, the occupying forces not being physically present in Palestinian towns and cities that were designated as Area A. Because the PA was established as a quasi-sovereign, the people were not in direct contact with Israel in the same manner as in the preceding decades. But at the same time, the reality after Oslo had also stalled the collective

struggle. Munir saw that people's attention had been directed to the problems of everyday life, rather than to the larger political objectives of the refugees:

> After Oslo accord, Palestinian people have started talking about, *ya'ni* [like], very, let's say, modern problems: I have problems with my car, I have to pay the bank, I have to deal with my sons' fees for the school [...] People after Oslo started to look their daily problems.

The interim period of Oslo ended in 1999 but no state creation was in sight. Israel had continued the expansion of the settlements during the whole of the 1990s; in fact the number of settlers increased by more than 50 percent between 1993 and late 1999 (by now it has quadrupled[34]), as Israel created "facts on the ground", a policy it has since implemented before entering into any negotiations. Furthermore, zones that were meant to be abolished when the interim period ended have become permanent feature of the landscape, still fragmenting the lands of the West Bank.

The frustration accumulated over the shortcomings of Oslo – and underlined by the failure of the Camp David negotiations – erupted in the Second Intifada, also known as al-Aqsa Intifada after Ariel Sharon's controversial visit to the Muslim holy site in 2000 that sparked the uprising. As has been mentioned, the Second Intifada was bloodier and more destructive, on both sides. Again, camps suffered a heavy toll because Israel considered them breeding grounds for suicide bombers. In 2002, Jenin refugee camp was first sieged and then bulldozed to the ground. Allegations of massacre were presented, though no proof of such was found by the investigations of different parties, including Human Right Watch (HRW 2002) and the UN[35]. Collective punishment was widely utilized by the IDF; for example, house demolition was a common action taken to make the whole community pay for the suicide attacks[36].

The Second Intifada slowly subsided, and the previous wearing and humiliating everyday life under the occupation returned. The elections in 2006 ended in victory for Hamas, an offshoot of the Muslim Brotherhood that was formed to participate in the First Intifada, and this resulted in a dispute with Fatah, the largest party in the PLO. The fighting between the two parties enforced the political separation of the West Bank and Gaza, as the latter came under the rule of Hamas and, in 2007, was placed under siege by Israel. By the time of my fieldwork, the disillusionment with the so-called peace process had become evident, and the anger at the worsening conditions was directed toward not only Israel but also the PA, which was blamed for corruption and for siding with Israel in suppressing manifestations of discontent. The PA was often described as an obstacle that hindered the resistance toward Israel.

The PA's misconduct and its silencing of political opponents have led to a situation in which, according to some of my interlocutors, Palestinians are not able to effectively confront the occupation because they are too tired after having to fight their own (see also Abusalim 2017). In October 2015, the frustration caused by the occupation found an outlet in the form of attacks that targeted mainly Israeli soldiers stationed at checkpoints, called the knife intifada (*intifadat as-sukkine*) by some, the Jerusalem intifada (*intifadat al-Quds*) by others, and individual outbursts of frustration by yet others.

Over the years, Palestinian refugees in the West Bank have become an integral part of the social and economic life of the area. At the same time, their exclusion has been maintained for political reasons. Those living in refugee camps do not, for example, pay taxes to the local municipalities; they are expected to pay them in their own villages once they get the chance to return. In everyday life, the refugee camp as a dwelling place defines experiences and possibilities more than the refugee status itself because no legal regulations limiting refugees' rights exist as they do in Lebanon. Living conditions in the camps continue to be harsher than in the surrounding neighborhoods, partly due to the IDF's policy to target the camps and partly due to their status as low-income neighborhoods. Still, it is the occupation and its violent manifestations that affect everyday life and thus also delimit the future scenarios of the refugees the most. The conditions in the occupied West Bank are constantly deteriorating: land confiscation, house demolition, violence, economic deprivation, restrictions on movement, and humiliation are an inseparable part of the everyday lives of Palestinians in the West Bank, and this is the case for both the refugees and the 'original' West Bankers.

The closely controlled majority: Palestinian refugees in Jordan

Jordan is the country that houses the largest number of Palestinian refugees and its policies toward the Palestinian community residing within its borders sets it apart from the other countries under UNRWA's mandate. Though by no means unproblematic, the way in which Palestinians are treated there makes Jordan the easiest place to be a Palestinian refugee in the Middle East, as was repeatedly mentioned by the refugees themselves. Known as the Emirate of Transjordan from 1921 till 1946, and then as the Hashemite Kingdom of Transjordan after gaining full independence from British rule, the country comprised, and partly still does, a strongly tribal society ruled by a royal family that originated from Hijaz, part of

present-day Saudi Arabia, and gained its legitimacy from being descended from Prophet Mohammed. Before 1948, the majority of Transjordanians were nomadic or semi-sedentary Bedouin and villagers living off the land (Gandolfo 2012: 2; on the socioeconomics of Jordan, see Tell 2013). The arrival of Palestinians reordered the demographics of the country, both in numbers and in social structuring. On average, Palestinians were more educated and urban than those who were already dwelling in the country (Massad 2001: 234), or were forced to become such due to the loss of their land and peasant livelihoods. The refugees' arrival rapidly urbanized Jordan as they settled in the cities and towns, in and outside of the refugee camps. A good example of the magnitude of the change that took place is the capital Amman, which grew from a town with a population of approximately 33 000 in 1947 to a city of more than 100 000 residents in only five years (Miles Doan 1992: 27).

As discussed in the previous section, in 1948 Jordan occupied the eastern parts of Mandatory Palestine now known as the West Bank and later annexed them to its territories. Even before the annexation, Palestinians from both banks – refugees and West Bankers – were granted full citizenship, making Jordan the only Arab state that has not maintained the statelessness of Palestinians[37]. These developments tripled the number of Jordanian citizens in only two years (Abu-Odeh 1999: 62, see also 54). The naturalization of Palestinians provided them with the same rights as Transjordanians. This enabled those with social and economic capital to quickly integrate into the economic life of the country, and even made them central to its development. As citizens, Palestinians were able to enter all sectors of society, including governmental posts and the army, even though the highest positions were usually filled based on tribal affiliation and thus reserved for Transjordanians. While the country benefited from the Palestinians' presence, the previously mentioned discourse of unity between the Transjordanians and Palestinians, who were described as two branches of the same Jordanian family (Nanes 2008: 90), made it difficult for them to express a separate Palestinian identity. This discourse of unity was fractured after the rise of the PLO and the Palestinian Resistance Movement at the end of 1960s, the former challenging Jordan's self-appointed position as the representative of Palestinians.

A turning point in the relation between Jordan and its Palestinian citizens was the Six-Day War in 1967 and the developments that followed. In this war, Jordan and Syria fought alongside Egypt in the face of a surprise attack by Israel, and ended up being on the losing side as Israel defeated the Arab armies and expanded its territories considerably[38]. The war inflicted a new round of mass displacement, as Palestinians fled to Jordan from the West Bank and the Gaza Strip, and caused the

severing of the West Bank from the Hashemite Kingdom. The war also created disillusionment among the Palestinians regarding the Arab countries' capability to liberate Palestine, and they directed their attention to strengthening their own resistance movement. The occupation of the West Bank forced the resistance fighters to relocate their operations to Jordan, where the refugee camps quickly became a fertile recruitment base for the movement. Consequently, the PLO, the founding of which Jordan had supported in 1964 (see Massad 2001: 236–237), became a hostile presence that challenged the sovereignty of the kingdom in its own territories. Confrontational sentiments had already been expressed before the defeat in the Six-Day War by, for example, PLO head Ahmad Shuqayri, whose statement in defiance of the Hashemite rule is quoted by Joseph A. Massad:

> He [Shuqayri] added that Jordan is "the homeland of the [Palestine Liberation] Organization and Jordan's people are its people." He also reminded his audience that the "East Bank" had been "torn" from Palestine in 1919 and that "the return of the East Bank to the motherland, in mind and conscience, and in spirit and body, is a basic step on the road of the return of the stolen homeland". (Massad 2001: 237)

King Hussein countered these statements by stressing the unity of Jordanians and the Arab nature of the Palestinian cause (Massad 2001: 237–238), but the rising popularity of the PLO and *fedayeen* among the Palestinian refugee community in the end led to a direct conflict between the Palestinian organization and the kingdom. A deviation from the otherwise remarkably non-violent history of Palestinians' coexistence in Jordan unfolded at the end of the 1970s and culminated in a short civil war between the Hashemite Kingdom and the PLO that lasted from 1970 till 1971.

Before this eruption of violence, the PLO had strengthened its presence in the country and formed "a state within a state" in the same manner as it later did in Lebanon. It also tried to influence the internal decision-making of the country. These indications of growing power, together with the guerilla attacks against Israel from Jordanian soil, which were viewed favorably among the Jordanian public, and the misconduct of fighters enabled the kingdom to present the PLO as a threat that needed to be dispelled from the country (see Barari 2008; Fruchter-Ronen 2008; Massad 2001: 241–242). In September 1970, a Palestinian leftist party that was also a major player in the armed resistance, the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine (PFLP), hijacked four airplanes, three of which were forced to land at an abandoned airport in Jordan. The hostages were released, and the airplanes blown up, but the events provoked retaliation from the Jordanian leadership. The civil war

that then started is known as Black September, named after the two weeks of intense fighting in mid-September 1970 during which thousands of people lost their lives. With the support of Bedouin tribal leaders, the regime carried out strikes against not only PLO bases but also the refugee camps and the civilian population living in them. Fawaz Turki notes that no distinction between the *fedayeen* and civilians was made:

> Hundreds of houses in Palestinian neighborhoods and refugee camps were destroyed by artillery fire under the pretext that there were snipers in them. Fires raged uncontrollably in the camps. The dead and dying lay in the streets. Hundreds died of unattended wounds. Children died of dehydration. Civilians who ventured beyond the confines of their homes, neighborhoods, or camps in search of food and water were mercilessly cut down in the streets by the Bedouin soldiers. Injured guerillas, or suspected guerillas, rescued by ambulances that somehow evaded the crossfire were finished off in hospitals by soldiers who hacked away at them with bayonets and butts of submachine guns. (Turki 1988: 98)

Though the guerilla forces had already been defeated by the end of 1970, the actual end of the conflict is considered to be the expulsion of the PLO and a great number of Palestinian fighters from Jordan to Lebanon in 1971.

Black September was a considerable setback for the Palestinian resistance movement, but in Jordan it was the Palestinian community remaining in the country that suffered the harshest consequences of the regime's suppression of the resistance. Members of Transjordanian tribes were already favored in the governmental and military sectors before the civil war, but after it the favoritism became much more apparent. In particular, the army was cleared of both Palestinians and those Transjordanians who supported the resistance movement, with many being fired in the wake of the war (Massad 2001: 246). National identity was redefined to stress the Transjordanian tribal affiliations, which strengthened the separation of the 'Jordanian Jordanians' not only from the 'Palestinian Jordanians' but also from the several other communities that had settled in Jordan over the years, including Circassians, Syrians, Iraqis, Chechens, and Armenians. The Palestinians' political influence was reduced after the Arab League summit in Rabat in 1974, when the PLO was declared the legitimate representative of Palestinians, as the king reorganized the cabinet (Abu-Odeh 1999: 210–213). Nowadays, though citizens of Palestinian origin are estimated to comprise more than 60 percent of the population, they are underrepresented especially in the governmental sector, and discrimination is named as the most pressing problem affecting Palestinians' lives in Jordan (al-Husseini & Bocco 2010: 280).

In addition to Jordan being the country with the largest number of registered refugees living in its territories and an even greater number of citizens of Palestinian origin not registered as refugees, the Palestinian community in Jordan also shows just how multilayered Palestinian exile is. The movement of people did not end in 1948 nor has it only taken place during violent upheavals such as Nakba in 1948 and the Six-Day War in 1967. These two temporal points have forced the majority of those now dwelling in Jordan to be on the move, but Palestinians have arrived, left, and returned again at all times up to the present. Compared with Lebanon, where the great majority of Palestinians are 1948 refugees, in Jordan the history is not as unified. Of the ten official camps in the country only four were established in the aftermath of 1948 and the rest of them are emergency camps that were created to house the refugees from the Six-Day War in the years following 1967. As has been mentioned, when the West Bank was part of Jordan, Palestinians traveled to the East Bank to study and work, and some settled there permanently. After the Six-Day War and the start of the occupation, people fled from the occupied areas to Jordan when their activities against Israel put their and their families' lives in danger. Kinship and marriage have mobilized people on both banks of the Jordan River, and especially women have crossed the border in both directions, to live with their husbands' families. Palestinians have moved from Jordan to the Gulf countries to seek a better income, and some have traveled to Europe and the United States to study and work. They have also returned to Jordan in large numbers, for example from Kuwait during the Gulf War. Citizenship, and the passport it provides, allows Palestinians to move and travel with relative ease, in a totally different manner than Palestinian refugees living in Lebanon and the occupied territories.

The different trajectories of Palestinians living in Jordan have also given birth to a set of different statuses into which Palestinians who have arrived from specific places, at specific times, for specific reasons, are divided. As previously mentioned, in 1950 Palestinians in both the West Bank and the East Bank were given Jordanian citizenship, and when West Bankers fled to Jordan in 1967 they maintained the status they already held. The refugees from Gaza, on the other hand, many of whom where 1948 refugees, did not receive citizenship. Though they have permanent residency and hold a three-year Jordanian passport, they are still stateless and have no national identification number, which excludes them from national health insurance and a number of professions. Yet another category is reserved for those Palestinians who have arrived from the West Bank since its occupation by Israel. West Bankers, on the other hand, refers to those Palestinians who have arrived in Jordan since 1988, when the kingdom officially withdrew its claim to the West Bank's territories and

announced its support for the formation of a Palestinian state. These four different legal statuses conferred by Jordan on Palestinians have been categorized by Oroub El-Abed, Jalal Husseini, and Oraib Al-Rantawi:

- "1948 refugees", regardless of whether or not they are registered with UNRWA as "Palestine refugees"

- "1967 West Bank displaced": those whose main place of residence has been the East Bank of the River Jordan since 1967

- The 1967 "Gazan displaced": either 1948 Palestine refugees or native Gazans who were transferred from Gaza to Jordan following the 1967 Arab-Israeli conflict

- West Bankers: those who have sought residence in the East Bank since July 1988.

(El-Abed et al. 2014: 13)

Palestinians in the first two categories hold citizenship, which means that some of them have the peculiar status of being both registered refugees and citizens of the host country (also Oesch 2017). The majority of Palestinian camp dwellers in Jordan are, in fact, also citizens of the country. Though in practice Palestinians face discrimination in some areas of their lives, on a legal level the majority are included in the national order. That refugee status is maintained even then is a political as well as a socioeconomic decision: refugee status is closely linked to the right of return, and registered refugees are entitled to receive assistance from UNRWA in addition to the services they receive from the government as citizens.

For those without citizenship, life in Jordan takes on a totally different type of reality. The Gazans, who for historic reasons have never acquired Jordanian nationality, are much more marginalized, and a larger number of them continue to live in the camps than refugees of West Bank origin. The conditions faced by Gazans resemble those of Palestinians in Lebanon, as they are also barred from working in governmental sectors and are not entitled to national insurance as they lack a national identification number (ARDD-Legal Aid 2015). Though this exclusion is not quite as thorough as in Lebanon, the limitations they face are a cause of frustration among the Gazans, who, to borrow the words of my interlocutor Amal, are in the middle: not able to return to Palestine but not allowed to live properly in Jordan either. Nevertheless, even for those Palestinians who currently live with the protection

provided by citizenship, precariousness remains because the citizenship can be arbitrarily withdrawn (see HRW 2010).

Albeit having its own disturbances, the history of Palestinians in Jordan has been considerably less turbulent than that of their compatriots in Lebanon and the West Bank. The major changes that have occurred since the 1970s are the 1988 disengagement from the West Bank and the peace agreement with Israel in 1994, which, although having had tangible consequences, in the end have hardly affected the lives of those Palestinians living inside Jordan. The citizenship held by the majority of Palestinians has made their everyday lives easier and included them in the host society. This has created a situation in which only a small minority of the people who identify as Palestinian still hold official refugee status, and a smaller minority continue to dwell in the camps. UNRWA refugee status is associated with getting provisions and assistance, and these are not needed by the majority of those of Palestinian origin. But even those who are not registered identify themselves as refugees, because of their historical belonging to Palestine.

What is telling about the degree to which Palestinians have been able to establish themselves in Jordan is that nowadays some of the most influential families in the country have a Palestinian background. Even though the *wasta* system – in which personal connections are utilized to achieve different aims – is an institutional part of Jordanian society and is closely tied to tribal affiliation, thus enhancing the possibilities of those belonging to the Transjordanian section of the population, Palestinians have a strong position in the private sector. Furthermore, due to the history and the sheer number of Palestinians in the country, Jordan is affected by the fate of Palestinians, even more so than Lebanon and Syria. The Hashemite rule and the Transjordanian identity of the country have been questioned and, in Israel especially, claims that Jordan is Palestine can be heard, with the country being seen as the place where the Palestinian state should be established (see Israeli 2003; Andoni 2010; Cox 2013). There exists, in fact, "a deep fear in Jordan that Palestinians would take over the country", as a friend described it, which is why the Palestinian refugee camps are kept under close surveillance. But, at the same time, because of the citizenship and the established status in society, Palestinians are in a rather good situation, especially compared with the multiple other refugee communities that have since arrived in Jordan, including the Iraqis, Libyans, Syrians, and Sudanese.

For Palestinians in Jordan, it is place of residence that most affects how they are treated. Living in Amman is different than living in rural areas, where the Transjordanian tribal communities are stronger and it is more difficult for Palestinians to build a life due to the *wasta* system. It is also different living in upscale

West Amman than in the more impoverished East Amman, as people are very strongly labeled according to where they happen to dwell: if Palestinians live in East Amman, and especially in a neighborhood such as Jabal Nathif, south of downtown Amman, they are more likely to be considered uneducated and associated with criminal activities regardless of their own merits. Furthermore, living in a camp is different than living in a city or town because the same stereotypes exist: camp Palestinians are considered to be less educated, to be working in the streets, and to be prone to causing trouble. Though exceptions do exist, in general those living in camps have poorer networks to utilize when seeking employment, services from the state, or favors in other walks of life.

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The decades that have passed since 1948 have molded the realities in which Palestinian refugees are currently dwelling. The differences in the histories and in social and political configurations have caused the refugee communities' trajectories to diverge and have created distinct everyday spaces with their own problems and enabling and disabling attributes. In this chapter the aim has been to describe how these different spaces have come into being, how they have created the various distinct realities in which to be a Palestinian refugee. It is very different being a Palestinian living in Jordan with citizenship and all the privileges it provides than a Palestinian in Lebanon, where Palestinians are comprehensively excluded from the society in which they live. And life is different again in the West Bank where refugees have to endure all the ills of the Israeli occupation.

The Palestinian refugee community as a whole has lived through different phases, from the days of Nakba to the heyday of resistance and revolution in the 1960s and 1970s. Since then, rounds of political negotiations that started in the late 1980s have given little more to the refugees than a sense of abandonment, more restrictions and a push from the center of official Palestinian politics to its margins. The decades of exile have witnessed endless waiting for a resolution and one crisis after another, which, after the immanent trauma of Nakba had diminished, gave rise to a revolutionary momentum but then led to new experiences of violence and, in the end, to the current fatigued stuckedness in which crisis has become the normal state of being. These histories of exile continue to frame the everyday in the camps, to some degree because they have become part of the materiality, as I will elaborate in the next chapter, but also because they form the (hermeneutic) tradition that refugees carry within, that informs their being and understandings.

While everyday lives are framed differently, the places where Palestinian refugees are living are still connected. The movement of people, kinship ties, and shared organizational frameworks bridge the spaces of exile and bring focus to their relational nature. Furthermore, the shared Palestinian identity connects people, even when its meaning varies, as does refugeeness and all the connotations it has for Palestinians: camps, dispossession, temporariness, Palestine, vulnerability, resistance, and the right of return. Nevertheless, despite these shared grand narratives, how lives are lived in the present and in imagined futures depends very much on the Palestinian refugees' position in the host community and on the possibilities this provides. This observation is part of this dissertation's central claim, and in the following chapters I depict these similarities and differences as I turn to the multi-sited ethnographic detail that delineates how the conditions of everyday are lived, and how futures are built in these different spatialities in which Palestinian refugees dwell.

5   The present: the exilic condition of Palestinian refugee camps

"You cannot live there, I cannot live there" said Majida, the director of a women and children's center, when we were discussing the living conditions in Baqa'a, the largest Palestinian refugee camp in Jordan, housing 119 000 Palestinian UNRWA-registered refugees. We were at Majida's office on the outskirts of Amman and she was telling me about her experience of working with the camp community. She had worked with the camp refugees for several decades and she was currently running a social center in Baqa'a camp. From a well-off and well-established Palestinian family herself, she had experienced life in the camps only through her work in them. Majida's account of the camps was a familiar narrative of the suffering, misery, poverty, crowdedness, and grimness I had encountered many times before. When I told her I had done fieldwork among the Palestinians in Lebanon, she recalled a documentary she had just watched on Palestinian refugee camps there and contrasted the realities of the camps in Jordan with these: "they don't even see the light, dark places. In Jordan, the situation is better". Majida noted that in Jordan there were only two camps where life was that difficult: those where the majority of refugees were of Gazan origin and did not possess Jordanian citizenship. In all three of my fields, it was the camp that stereotypically epitomized the difficulty of refugee existence. This tendency to stress the difficulties of camp life was common among my interlocutors, both those living in the camps and those observing them from the outside. Yet this was not the whole picture that was painted of camps: they were also described as spaces of solidarity, political struggle, identity, and history.

Though theorization of camps often concentrates on a single feature that defines them as a spatiality, camps as lived spaces are always more multidimensional, and Ilana Feldman has observed the complex meanings they can hold:

> Camps have been variously understood – by both humanitarians and refugees – as spaces of deprivation and of protection, as temporary and long-term, and as psychologically damaging and nurturing. The meanings ascribed to camps, and the uses to which they are put, further shape the relationships that emerge among the various actors in these spaces. (Feldman 2015a: 250)

The seven decades that have passed since Nakba have seen profound political and social change in the refugee communities. The years have transformed the camps into durable sites of dwelling that have grown organically as the number of refugee dwellers has multiplied. Though maintaining their exceptionality when it comes to access to rights and political belonging, the refugee camps are the de facto permanent homes for their inhabitants, and they have become an integral part of the landscape in which they exist. In this chapter, I concentrate on different aspects of camp life – the material, the social, and the symbolic – in order to understand how the camp frames life. I start by looking at camp materiality and community, at what types of space they are and how they are experienced by my interlocutors who dwell in them. Then I turn to consider the camps as part of their surroundings, examining how their meanings and manifestations are always linked to the locality in which they exist. Last, I consider the camps as political spaces, ones in which Palestinian refugees' political identity is produced. In this chapter I am able to demonstrate the strength of the multi-sited approach, as I will discuss the different sites concurrently, to draw attention to the similarities and differences in the lived realities.

The question this chapter aims to answer is: *What is it like to live in camps in different host countries, what types of setting do they provides for everyday life*? Understanding this is central to the main aim of this dissertation, because the experienced present creates the basis for aspirations: my interlocutors aim to change the negative and preserve the positive when they try to build what is considered a good life within their "communally defined heritage" (Polt 1999: 101). Camps are an integral part of the heritage that frames their possible projects for the future (ibid.) and, since the conditions faced in them can delimit or enable the hopes and possibilities my interlocutors have, they form the grounds for negotiating the desired future. Hence, to understand the frames in which futures emerge, I explore the conditions my interlocutors face in their everyday lives as Palestinian refugees dwelling in camps.

5.1   Material frames of dwelling: the dissonance of political temporariness and everyday permanence

"Here, you see the houses are so close they are touching each other. No privacy in the camp. They [the houses] are in a bad condition, some of them don't even have proper roofs, only zinc plates. And here, you see the garbage on the streets? See how the government isn't taking care of us". The description went on as I and a friend who was accompanying me were walking along the alleys of Marka camp just outside

Amman with a young man we had just met on the street. After a short chat, he offered to take us to the house of the *mukhtar* (the head of the camp, lit. elected, chosen), who could explain life in the camp in more detail. As we walked on, the young man pointed out our surroundings, using the materiality as a reference point for explaining the living conditions of those dwelling in the camp. He brought to our attention the inadequate housing, the lack of state involvement, and the crowdedness of the camp space. The houses were not as high as some of those I had seen in camps in Lebanon and the West Bank, the layout not as unorganized, and the streets not as narrow, but they were of a similar form: barren concrete buildings side by side, divided into blocks by undermaintained streets. I had had similar tours in Lebanon and the West Bank, during which my attention was brought to similar aspects of the camp materiality: the deficient sewage systems, the narrow alleys and lack of public space, and the houses with several floors standing right next to one another.

The material structuring of refugee camps is often considered to be a form of humanitarian governance, as UNHCR or other humanitarian agencies determine the layout and the permitted type of building (e.g. Turner 2010). UNRWA followed this controlling logic when the camps were established in the late 1940s and early 1950s: the camp space was organized by allocating a plot of land to each family, while the host government controlled the type of building that could take place (al-Husseini 2011; Sanyal 2010). The irregular material landscape witnessed in the camps today, however, is a result of the refugees disregarding these regulations and going beyond their UNRWA-designated plots to take over land where they could to increase their living space (see Sanyal 2010), giving birth to the present-day zigzagging, narrow, and sometimes dead-end alleys of the camp.

Despite the local specificities, the material form and the difficulties it creates is a dimension that connects the camps in my fields. They have such similarities that, after exposure to the camp landscape in one host country, it became possible to recognize camps simply from their material appearance. These material characteristics demarcate the camps from their surroundings and – when there are no walls or checkpoints bordering them – create a distinction between inside and outside. The materiality of the camp is thus the most observable difference between life in a camp and life in a so-called normal neighborhood, as it affects how the camps are experienced as places of dwelling.

The political materiality and discourse of temporariness

When approaching Aida camp in the West Bank from the east, the visitor is welcomed by murals with the words "Welcome to Aida camp – 1948", the year of the Palestinian Nakba. The English greeting is followed by the Arabic words *hurriyah* (freedom), *karamah* (dignity), and *'a'iduun* (we are returning). In another mural on the same wall is a depiction of the separation wall broken into pieces by an olive tree, with a hand holding a key – a symbol of the return – behind it. Further on, those entering the camp must walk through a huge gate shaped like a keyhole, an equally giant key hovering above it.

In Lebanon and the West Bank, this is the landscape one witnesses in the camps. They are filled with Palestinian symbols that tell of the history of resistance and have enduring political significance; political posters and flags, pictures of martyrs, statues, murals, and banderols are all symbols of refugeeness, steadfastness, and Palestine that color the camp landscape and highlight the political centrality of the camps, even when their actual political power does not match the abundance of symbols. In Burj Shemali camp, after passing through the Lebanese checkpoint that guards the entrance, the view is taken over by symbols of Fatah, the leading party of the PLO, with flags, pictures of Yasser Arafat, and the name of the party written on the walls. The symbols present in the camp landscapes makes them spaces of "communication, competition and contestation" (Ramadan 2009a) in which the identities, claims and, in fact, aspirations of Palestinian refugees are produced and reproduced. This also makes them spaces that clearly draw past and future to the present, constantly reminding the camp dwellers of both their origin and their political projects.

The Jordanian camps formed an exception to this familiar type of camp landscape. There, the lack of such symbols tells of a different political reality: the political activities of Palestinians in Jordan are closely monitored, and Palestinian political parties are not present in the same way as in the West Bank and Lebanon, where, despite all the quasi-qualities of their position, they actually wield power. Yet, the political discourse on the centrality of return has become part of the landscapes in Jordan too: the school walls in Baqa'a camp were filled with murals depicting Palestine and the right of return.

While these political symbols easily attract the attention of visitors, the camps also manifest politics more discreetly. The distinctive materiality witnessed in the camps is an outcome of intentional political practices: refugees' insistence on preserving their non-belonging and maintaining the right of return has been materialized in the camp environment. Compromised living conditions and the

emphasized temporariness have been connoted with the refugee identity, and they have been maintained to remind the world about Palestinians' refugeeness and their commitment to return to Palestine even when 70 years have passed since Nakba. The rejection of settlement has meant suspicion toward camp improvement projects, whether they be replacing old houses with new and better ones or enhancing the comfortability of camp life by adding green spaces and painting dwellings (see Peteet 2005; Gabiam 2016). Ilana Feldman has noted that there have, nevertheless, been differences in how refugees have reacted to such projects. She found that resistance was strongest in Syria and Lebanon, where the projects were clearly associated with permanent settlement (Feldman 2012a: 31). In Jordan, on the other hand, political control over the camps was, and is, stricter (Feldman 2015a) than in Lebanon, and the state has also been much more involved in and much more flexible on the infrastructural development of the camps (al-Husseini 2011). While some continue to view institutional improvement projects with suspicion (al-Husseini 2011; Gabiam 2016), many welcome them as enhancements of their living conditions.

Due to this underlined temporariness, Palestinian camps are places where different spatialities and temporalities are brought together: the camps tell of dispossession and enforce the future return. The camp space is thus always relational, emerging in encounters, both material and social, and from processes of signification that incorporate the concrete and the imagined. As geographer Adam Ramadan (2013) has noted, the "refugee camps have become permanent-temporary landscapes of exile, spaces of Palestine in liminality, drawing meaning from Palestine of the past and future". In the West Bank I witnessed this insistence on temporariness in practice when I joined a friend working in UNRWA to participate in a painting activity in Aida camp. An older man approached my friend, who was managing the project, and loudly protested: "Are we are in a refugee camp or in Los Angeles?". He thought that the painting was making the camp too stylish, that it was normalizing it as a place of residence.

Despite this insistence on preserving the temporariness and exceptionality, it is self-evident that camp materialities have gone through changes over the decades, as the need to house new generations and to live in somewhat decent conditions – the needs of everyday life – has rendered the mere waiting for return impossible. But while construction is constantly taking place in the camps, on the level of discourse at least the importance of maintaining the temporariness continues to affect the camp materiality: too polished houses are still said to be a symbol of resettlement and of investing one's future in the place of refuge, rather than waiting for return.

In the West Bank, I discussed this discrepancy with third-generation refugees in their late twenties and early thirties, who were actively trying to challenge the ways in which the camps had traditionally been defined within the refugee communities. One of these young refugees was Raji, who vigorously denounced the view that refugees should live in compromised conditions in order to maintain their refugeeness and the right to return. He pointed out that the political discourse on the right of return forced many people to live in miserable conditions, by connecting material deprivation to political existence as a refugee. While we were sitting in the yard of the el-Feniq Center, located on a hilltop in Dheisheh camp in Bethlehem, Raji reflected on the conflicting relation between this discourse of material temporariness and the actions the refugees were actually engaged with:

> *Halla* [now], in the case of West Bank refugee camps, you can just, the image here is very powerful [referring to the view we had down to the camp]. People do it no matter what. They are actually, constantly aiming to improve their houses, you know, life conditions. Problem is when they speak about it. […] Every time you go in the camp, you see new things taking place, new buildings, new constructions, new improvements taking place.

The stress on temporariness has had its effects on the present materiality, and thus on living conditions, but the camps are, nevertheless, constantly evolving; when walking in them, I often saw construction taking place, especially so in the West Bank and Lebanon. Though I encountered attitudes that reinforced the temporariness, for the majority of people the needs of everyday life, and the aim of constantly improving their living conditions in whatever ways were available, were much more important than hanging on to the politically determined materiality.

Furthermore, the materiality in the camps was at times viewed as a positive reflection of the community that came into being as people gathered together when the camps were formed. While drastic improvements and resettlement schemes were opposed as compromising the refugees' nonbelonging, the refugees' own building projects were framed as demonstrating the solidarity that existed between the camp dwellers, as they were evidence of their shared efforts to improve the material conditions. When Mona's father started to build their new house in the less-crowded area of Arroub camp in West Bank, neighbors and friends came to help, just as he had helped them when they were building their houses. This solidarity was brought up especially in the West Bank, where the Palestinian resistance's role in the 1960s and 1970s in enhancing communal spirit and pride was also stressed: people volunteered to repair and improve the camp infrastructure, which, despite improvements, continued to be a major source of frustration for the camp dwellers.

Figure 1 Dheisheh camp. Picture taken from the roof of the el-Feniq Center

Camps as sites of infrastructural and material violence

"Kahraba' aw ishtirak?" (electricity or generator?) was a question I often heard when someone from my host family in Tyre returned home. It was a theme I had grown used to already, when living in different parts of Beirut a few years earlier. This question, whether the house was being powered by electricity (*kahraba'*) or was temporarily connected to the generator network known as *ishtirak*, formed the rhythm of the everyday all over Lebanon, regardless of whether one lived inside a camp or not. Due to the compromised infrastructure, erratic electricity distribution affects the whole country. When I was living relatively close to downtown Beirut in 2014 and 2015, it meant two pre-determined hours a day without electricity; by 2019 this had increased to three hours, and by 2020 the number of hours with electricity had again decreased considerably due to the multiple crises ravaging the country. Once outside the capital, and especially in the camps and irregular neighborhoods, access to electricity becomes even more precarious. The unreliable electricity means that those who can afford it are also connected to an alternative power source. Most

people do not have their own generators but are linked to generators provided by private operators, which have capitalized on the dysfunctional electricity infrastructure.

Many activities within the house depended on the answer to this question about the electricity. A generator was not strong enough to support everyday devices that needed a strong current, such as the water heaters needed for showers, the electric heaters that warmed up the houses in winter, and also washing machines and electric ovens, which forced people to schedule household chores accordingly. In the gathering where I lived during my fieldwork, we sometimes had whole days without electricity, which meant that some tasks had to be postponed until the electricity was on again. In wintertime, rain and thunderstorms could cut off the electricity at any time, leaving those who could afford them to depend on the generators. Having to pay both electricity and generator bills was a common complaint, especially because the dysfunctional electricity network was blamed on the corruption of the decisionmakers, who were seen as serving the *ishtirak* operators rather than the ordinary people living in the country.

Infrastructural shortcomings, like the insufficient electricity network that frustrates people in Lebanon, are a practical and mundane effect of compromised materiality. This affects how people experience their lived environment, as Dennis Rodgers and Bruce O'Neill (2012: 402) stress when they write that "infrastructure is a key factor shaping people's direct relationships both with each other and with their environment in cities". They continue, that it functions as both a literal and a figurative point of demarcation, defining "which points in urban contexts can and should be connected, […] the kinds of people and goods that can and should circulate easily, and which should stay put, and who can and should be integrated within the city, and who should be left outside of it". Passive infrastructural violence, as defined by Rodgers and O'Neill (2012), constructs the lives of many impoverished dwellers whose homes are not part of the established infrastructural networks, such as electricity and sanitation, and whose physical exclusion from infrastructural services often leads to different forms of social exclusion.

The type of infrastructural violence that Palestinian refugees face can often be considered this type of passive exclusion, as they are not deemed important enough to be connected. Many of the problems faced in the camps are not unique to them but are similar to those faced in other irregular neighborhoods housing marginalized sectors of the host society. Nevertheless, during my fieldwork the infrastructural shortcomings had an immense effect on the everyday life of Palestinian refugees and this was reflected in how content people were with their present situation.

In Lebanon, the dysfunctional infrastructures were seen as part of the country's basic fabric, as something that reflected the weakness of the state and the disinterest of its political leaders in the general good of the country's residents. If someone wanted to get something done, for example a street paved or an electricity line fixed, they had to have strings to pull, connections to the decisionmakers who could facilitate the process (see Joseph 2011). The socio-legal status of Palestinians means that they do not usually have this type of connection. Camp infrastructure improvement projects are left to UNRWA and other non- or intra-governmental organizations, which have limited resources with which to provide as much help as is needed. Often, Palestinians are forced to turn to clandestine practices, to access electricity for example. The hanging electric wires that crisscross above the streets are a sign of the practices that the refugees have to resort to when their needs are not catered for by the sovereigns.

Figure 2 The main street of Burj Shemali camp, Tyre, Lebanon

Unlike in Lebanon, in the West Bank infrastructural difficulties are not merely an accidental fault in the distribution networks but rather a result of deliberate actions

taken by the occupying power. As such they should be viewed in line with the wider aim of aggravating Palestinians' lives, which is practiced to the extent that leaving becomes the most feasible option for achieving a good life (see Peteet 2017: 9). Israel's control over everyday resources and infrastructures defines the lives of all Palestinians in the occupied territories. Restricted movement, imposed by checkpoints, Israelis-only roads, and the permit regime, is the clearest example of the violent infrastructures that define Palestinians' possibilities in the West Bank (see Weizman 2007), but problems concerning access to electricity and water are also part of everyday life (e.g. Salamanca 2014). Nada, one of my main interlocutors in the West Bank, described the Israeli actions of cutting Palestinians off from these basic distribution networks within the larger frame of Israel's aim to hamper Palestinians' lives:

> I have studied in one of my classes [at university] that even in under occupation, the occupying party must protect the civilians. So in our situation, whether Jews or Palestinians, we should be protected by Israel. But of course, nothing is going to, nothing has happened, and nothing is going to happen because they just want to get rid of all of us. And, yeah, for example even water and electricity, especially in the summertime, they cut it off for days and weeks, and now Ramadan is coming up, I don't know what we're gonna do. But we usually we have to buy our own water from supermarket or something, to be able to drink and cook. So it really depends on their mood. […] I think they are trained to humiliate us as much as they can, to pretend that we do not exist. Our existence does not have any importance, as if we're not humans.

Nada's phrasing of the situation crystallizes the general atmosphere among Palestinians in the West Bank: in the end, nothing is in their hands. Israel can humiliate them and aggravate their lives as much as it wants, leaving them with limited resources for building the security or stability needed to live a normal life. The refugee camps exist in this wider context, and while they also have their specificities, for example in that their infrastructures fall under UNRWA's mandate, the occupation is nevertheless what most comprehensively frames these everyday infrastructures.

In Jordan, the situation is, again, different. Though the presence of garbage on the streets of Marka camp was given as evidence of abandonment by the Jordanian government, the state is actually involved in improving and maintaining the camp infrastructures (see al-Husseini 2011), though in no way sufficiently, in the eyes of the camp inhabitants. As in Lebanon, in Jordan the experienced insufficiencies resembled those faced in other impoverished neighborhoods, such as those in East

Amman, where the presence of the state is not felt in the same manner as in the more affluent areas of West Amman. Though not abandoned in the same way as their counterparts in Lebanon, the camp infrastructures were not well protected either, or considered to be of value. A local researcher told me about a plan to build a new highway that would pass through Jabal Hussein camp, in the center of Amman, and would thus require the demolition of houses that were in its way. An infrastructural improvement project from the perspective of the city's transportation network would thus take precedence over the homes of refugee families, many of whom had little means with which to move elsewhere. Similar fears were also present in Shabriha gathering in Lebanon, where highway plans threatened the homes of its Palestinian residents.

Though infrastructural development projects displace people all over the world, for my Palestinian interlocutors this was one embodiment on the wider spectrum of disregard, uncertainty, and abandonment they experienced. Infrastructures facilitate the smooth flow of the everyday and, though people usually had simply become used to their malfunctioning, they could also cause frustration and function as a marker of abandonment. Oftentimes, Palestinian camps are at the mercy of actors over which they have no or only nominal control, especially in Lebanon and the West Bank, which further complicates the possibilities of gaining improvements and protection. In Jordan, while the camp infrastructures fall under the remit of the government, my interlocutors still felt abandoned by the state, that they were not among those looked after, either materially or socially.

Furthermore, infrastructural shortcomings were considered in line with the more active forms of material violence to which Palestinian refugee camps have been subjected. Palestinian camps have been violated precisely because they are places housing Palestinian refugees and, hence, they are full of material layers that tell of violence and vulnerability, which are both personal and collective at the same time (cf. Nucho 2016: 35). Palestinian camps have been demolished, bombed, and damaged, and they have been sites of fighting that has left its marks on them. In the West Bank, it became evident that a certain street or corner of the camp could carry meanings that were not visible to those who were not familiar with the events that had unfolded: a place where a friend was shot or where an Israeli soldier threatened you with a gun; a house where they arrested someone; a neighborhood from where you carried a person shot by an Israeli soldier to an ambulance that could not access the narrow alleys of the camp. There are also more visible traces: an old checkpoint entrance; a Star of David sprayed on the pavement by Israeli soldiers who regularly enter the camp; demolished houses; and bullet holes yet to be filled. Similarly in

Lebanon, the civil war with its Israeli bombings, and especially the War of the Camps, has left marks that are still visible in the camp materiality. Collapsed buildings and houses scarred by heavy gunfire are still present in the camp landscapes, a reminder of the civil war and the heavy toll it took on the Palestinian communities.

Experienced violence has thus been embodied in the camp materiality and is carried by the refugees, who have either experienced it themselves or had it passed on to them by previous generations who were there when the events took place. A friend from Rashidieh camp, in her late twenties, remembered how during the 2006 war she had sat on the flat roof of her family's house and watched in bewilderment while Israeli fighters bombed the surrounding Shia villages. What triggered this memory was that we were sitting in the same place when her neighbor happened to pop her head out of the window that opened up onto the roof, to talk with her. This mundane occurrence made my friend remember how they had sought shelter together in the neighbor's house, how they had climbed into her house through that same window.

This type of stories about experienced and witnessed violence were specific to Lebanon and the West Bank, where they were part of the everyday landscape of my interlocutors. In Jordan, though violence is also part of the camp histories, the more stable situation in the country has allowed the camps to exist in relative calm for several decades now, ever since the PLO was ousted from the country in the 1970 civil war. It was also clear that camps in Jordan were much more connected to the surrounding sovereign than those in Lebanon: they were named on maps, they were destinations of city bus routes, and they had government services, such as schools, because the majority of their residents were also Jordanian citizens and, since Jordan's peace agreement with Israel in 1994, had been included in the country's infrastructural development programs (see Husseini 2011). The specific characters of the camps and the political importance of their temporariness have nevertheless affected how the camp infrastructure has been treated and how the development programs have been implemented in Jordan. For example, issues concerning land tenure have not been dealt with in order not to compromise the temporary status of the camps (al-Daly 1999).

Escaping the crowdedness

As we were walking in El Buss camp, my friend gestured at the houses around us, noting jokingly that she had often wondered what would happen if an earthquake

hit the area. She said that because no one had ever calculated the buildings' ability to withstand the pressure caused by the added floors, she was fairly sure that they would collapse immediately if there were an earthquake of any magnitude. The camps as demarcated and controlled spaces have affected how the materiality within them has been able to evolve. Unregulated vertical building is a common practice in the camps as it has usually been the only option for increasing living space. Building and renovation is usually self-organized, with families building according to their needs, for example when a son needs an apartment in order to get married and start a family of his own. Though over the decades the borders of Palestinian refugee camps have become increasingly porous, with people and houses spilling over into their surroundings, the demarcation of the camps continues to be enforced both materially and socially. Furthermore, the economic realities of the refugee families have affected building practices, and a result of the limited options available has often been substandard housing, which continues to be a problem faced in all of the camps and thus a major factor through which the refugees conceptualize the quality of their lives.

The official borders of the UNRWA camps have seen only a couple of significant changes, with the area allocated to each camp staying more or less the same. As refugees have continued to dwell in the camps, they have become densely built-up places, every inch of which has been utilized to shelter the growing number of inhabitants. Within my field, the biggest of the camps is Baqa'a in Jordan where approximately 119 000 registered refugees live in an area measuring 1.4 square kilometers[39], and the smallest is Aida camp located north-west of Bethlehem's city center with 3150 registered refugees living on 0.0771 square kilometers with an estimated population density of 77 464 per square kilometer[40]. Rashidieh in Lebanon, on the other hand, is one of the rare cases of camps that have officially been expanded, with 'the new camp' being built in 1963 to house refugees displaced from Gouraud camp located in Baalbek, northeastern Lebanon. In addition, the surrounding fields have allowed for the construction of new single-story houses – that is, if one has the financial means to do so – but the usual way to establish a new household in the camp is to add a floor to an existing building that has been left unfinished for precisely this purpose.

In the camps established after 1948, this organic growth has meant that several floors have already been added, which has reduced the amount of sunlight and, together with the low-quality materials used, caused health problems. The camps have become densely populated places with little if any space for leisure activities and greenery. Crowdedness had become a shared annoyance for camp dwellers

throughout my fields, as it had created a lack of privacy. There is a joke that when you sneeze in a refugee camp it is your neighbor who says bless you. In Marka camp, one of the 1967 emergency camps in Jordan, a group of women complained how it was impossible to talk with their children, to scold them, without the neighbors hearing. Especially for women, the lack of privacy and the fact that neighbors could hear and see everything delimited their freedom: if there was no cover from the surrounding houses, women could not remove their *hijab* even at home, which is usually the first thing those using it do when they enter the private sphere.

The overpopulation of the camps is by no means a new phenomenon. Back in 1975, Bassem Sirhan wrote about the overcrowdedness and high population density in Palestinian camps in Lebanon (Sirhan 1975). Since the period he discusses, three of the original 15 camps have been destroyed, which has further increased the crowdedness of the remainder. Palestinian camps have also attracted members of the surrounding society's impoverished sectors, who cannot afford housing outside the camps. In the West Bank, this has meant other Palestinians, whereas in Lebanon, and especially in Beirut, the spectrum of backgrounds is much wider, including Lebanese, Syrian and Iraqi as well as Kurdish and Bangladeshi. In both Jordan and Lebanon a significant number of both Syrian Syrians and Syrian Palestinians – as they were labeled by the local Palestinians – have moved to the camps since the uprising that started in 2011 turned into a violent civil war that forced people to flee.

There has of course also been outmovement. Refugees have fled wars and violence, emigrated to Europe, the United States and the Gulf countries in search of work and higher education, or gained enough economic capital to move outside the camps. In Jordan and the West Bank, the improvement in the economic position of the refugees has enabled the current reality in which the majority of UNRWA-registered refugees dwell outside the camps. In Lebanon the legal restrictions on ownership that Palestinians face have stalled similar processes, and even the fancy houses that Palestinians have built in the gatherings in Tyre are in a precarious position as they cannot be legally owned by their Palestinian inhabitants.

A contrast to the crowdedness of the camps was life in the villages. A friend living in Beit Ummar, a village near Arroub camp in southern West Bank, explained how his sisters could walk outside without covering their hair thanks to the land separating their house from that of their closest neighbor, whereas the situation of his cousins living in a camp was completely different. The lack of recreational spaces in the camps also resulted in girls being more confined to their homes than boys, who were given more freedom to roam the streets of the camps by themselves (see also Marshall 2015). This difference became more evident when boys and girls

reached their teenage years. Yet also for boys crowdedness means fewer places to play: Sam, a man in his early twenties from Dheisheh camp, recalled how he used to play football in the camp when he was a child, but now, less than two decades later, it was no longer possible. Young boys could be seen kicking footballs in the narrow alleys of Dheisheh, sometimes causing annoyance to those passing by, because there was no designated space available to them.

It is precisely this overcrowdedness that has led people to look for ways to move outside the camps. In both the West Bank and Jordan, it was stressed that the majority of those who had the financial means to do so would prefer to live somewhere else, for the simple reason of having more space and privacy and better-quality homes. In the West Bank, Hassan was one of those who had managed to move out from Dheisheh camp, to an area just outside its borders known as "the suburb" (on the area, see Campus in Camps 2013). He had bought a decent-sized plot in the early 1990s when the price of the land was still considerably lower than it currently is. To build the new house, he and his wife had taken three loans, two of which they were still paying back. After they had received the loans, it was still several years before they were able to get the place to a livable condition and thus move out from their house inside the camp. When I spent time with Hassan's family at their home, they had lived in the new two-story house for less than a year, and the ground floor was still unfinished. The mountain slope just beyond the borders of Dheisheh on which this house was built had been empty only ten years previously, but in 2016 it was full of new houses and more were under construction.

For Hassan, the reason for moving out from the camp was a common one: to have more space, privacy, and independence from interfering family and neighbors, some quiet in the evenings, and fresh air and sunlight from all directions. Hassan and his wife had five children, all of them still living with their parents, and moving out from the camp was also a way to provide them with a better environment in which to grow up. "It is human nature to improve yourself, to be independent. […] No one wants to live in the camp because it is the camp. They live there because they have no other choice", was how Hassan explained it. He nevertheless wanted to stay close to the camp where his mother and many of his other relatives still lived. His old house went to his brother, who did not have the financial means to construct one himself.

Privacy was also one of the key reasons Mona's father started to build his own house in Arroub camp in southern West Bank. The family used to share an apartment with Mona's uncles in the lower part of the camp, in which each family had just one room to themselves. Unlike Hassan, when it became possible to build

and thus get more space and privacy, Mona's family stayed within the camp borders, moving to a higher area where there was still empty space on which to build. Others, those with the necessary income, have purchased land from the villages surrounding the camp and have built rather upscale houses right outside the official borders of Arroub camp.

Mona's father and Hassan were by no means the only ones who hoped to improve their living conditions by providing their families with more space in which to live. Living in the camp was inevitably associated with crowdedness and its negative side effects and it was common to give privacy and independence as reasons for wanting to move out. Proper independence was not considered possible in camps, as the camp community was always there to monitor others' actions, to give their opinion, and to judge and gossip about those who did not behave according to the community norms. Though gaining more living space could by no means be the answer to all the difficulties faced in everyday life, it nevertheless provided "more air to breathe" as Hassan phrased it. In Jordan, moving out from the camp could mean a major improvement in other aspects of life also, for reasons I will elaborate shortly.

Sometimes, the crowdedness of the camps produced extreme confrontations. One afternoon in Lebanon, I heard my host family talking about something in a hushed tone. They explained to me that about a week before a young man had been shot in the chest in El Buss camp, and now he had been released from hospital. The perpetrator was the young man's neighbor, and though this was known he had not been arrested by the camp security forces. The neighbor, an older man who lived right beside the victim, was protected by the camp's political leaders, and was thus still there when the young man was able to return home, the bullet lodged between his lungs and heart. The reason for the incident had been construction: the young man was building a new apartment for himself that was so close to the old man's house that it would have blocked the sunlight from entering.

Though this was the only such violent escalation I heard of, tension caused by diminishing space and light was a rather common occurrence. In Burj Shemali camp, a director of the camp's security forces named the quarrels over land and building as one of the most common cases in which they had to interfere. For those who remained in the camps, frustration over the lack of privacy, light, and control over how neighboring buildings affected living conditions were a common, and even unavoidable, part of camp life. Those who could not afford to live elsewhere had little option but to endure this, which in some cases led to mounting frustration that could erupt in a seemingly disproportionate manner.

Trouble related to building had also affected Mona's family in the West Bank, where they had built a new house precisely because it could provide them with improved conditions. Mona's neighbor had installed a shade on his balcony, to give his wife and daughters more privacy to allow them to take off their *hijab* at home. Hoping to increase privacy and thus his family's quality of life, the neighbor's action had also prevented the sun from entering Mona's family home. This lack of sunlight made the house cold and damp, and the family was unable to use the first floor of their two-story apartment due to the moldy smell. The intense humidity could be felt already at the doorstep. Because the first floor was uninhabitable, the house that was supposed to provide Mona's family with more space could not fully grant the wish that had motivated its building.

In the Palestinian context, the camp has been framed as an integral part of being a refugee but as the years have gone by the need to live in decent conditions has become more important than the political link drawn between the camp and refugee status, resulting in its renegotiation. The formation of refugee communities, such as that of Doha next to Dheisheh camp, tells of the refugees' aim to improve their situation in protracted displacement. Though building outside the camps has not been as straightforward in Lebanon, where Palestinians are not permitted to own houses outside the camps, it nevertheless takes place and is seen as a way to achieve a better situation. The camps have witnessed the building of these unofficial Palestinian gatherings in their surroundings, places that can provide an enhanced standard of living compared with the crowdedness of the camps themselves.

Struggling to improve the conditions

Jal al-Bahar is a gathering on the coast of Tyre. It is located right by the sea, the houses standing only a few meters from where the lazy autumn waves reach. Concrete walls topped with roofs of corrugated iron stand on the small plot, squeezed between the sea and a road where cars speed by on their way in and out of the city. At the beginning of my fieldwork in late October, the sea was still relatively calm, but as winter approached the wind and waves were bound to show their strength, and then the gathering was at the mercy of the raging sea. Every winter the strong waves damage the houses on the shoreline, and those built too close to the sea slowly collapse, their ruins standing there as reminders. Yet, instead of being a battle between the forces of nature and the stubborn humans who have decided to live there, the picture is more complicated. Housing Palestinian refugees who have

little possibilities to live anywhere else, Jal al-Bahar is not a camp but an unofficial gathering and its lands are thus not leased by UNRWA, leaving it without the agency's protection.

This gathering was completely destroyed in 1982 when Israel occupied southern Lebanon and it was later rebuilt when the residents were allowed to return. Though the gathering has existed for decades, eviction is nevertheless a lingering threat as the landowners have the final say on the matter. I was told several times that the land on which the gathering is built has become valuable over the years, and that the gathering might face demolition if the owners choose to put the seaside location to more profitable use. And the first steps in this direction could, in fact, be seen when I returned to Tyre in 2019: the previously empty field next to Nahr Samir gathering, located between Jal al-Bahar and El Buss camp, had been filled with buildings that housed several shops and restaurants. Though not an immediate threat to the surrounding gatherings, this was a step toward 'developing' the area, to which the undesired residents could easily become a hinderance.

In addition to the precarity created by the issue of land ownership, getting permission to renovate the houses in the gathering is close to impossible. The use of cement is prohibited, and at times the Lebanese military has come and demolished the improvements that have been carried out. The busy road that demarcates the narrow coastal strip on which Jal al-Bahar is built has caused loss of life as residents crossing the road have been hit by speeding cars. Every time I visited the place, to do interviews or to meet a friend's family who lived there, I was reminded to be careful when crossing the road, and every now and then felt the hand of my field assistant on my shoulder to prevent me from carelessly stepping out. The residents of Jal al-Bahar had repeatedly requested that speed bumps be installed, to slow down the drivers, but the Lebanese authorities had not complied with their wishes.

Figure 3 Alley in Jal al-Bahar gathering

Though in some ways unique, the case of Jal al-Bahar nevertheless exemplifies the situation faced in other gatherings in Lebanon, as their unofficial status renders

them precarious spaces in which improving living conditions is exceedingly difficult. Multiple projects have been designed by the UN and different NGOs to aid the refugees in this process. In fact, oftentimes it is the interference of international organizations that is needed in securing building permits from the Lebanese officials. In Jal al-Bahar, the Norwegian Refugee Council was able to get permits to repair houses and build a defense wall that would protect the homes from the sea. By 2015, they had been able to renovate 120 houses and build 200 meters of wall, while approximately 60 houses and 800 meters of defense wall were still to be constructed. Similar projects were executed in other gatherings, such as Shabriha, where EU countries funded the improvement of streets and sewage systems and the repair of electricity cables. Mohammad, a member of the Popular Committee in the gathering, remarked that the involvement of nongovernmental organizations and UN agencies, such as the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), are crucial because, unlike in the official camps, Shabriha's material infrastructure is not part of UNRWA's development programs.

In contrast, inside the camps improvements are implemented by UNRWA, especially since the focus of its programs has been transferred from humanitarianism to development (see Gabiam 2016). During my stay in Tyre, a project to improve the roads in Rashidieh's lower camp was under way. Construction work, however, had been stalled for several months when I arrived in late October because of an incident in which one of the local construction workers had been shot dead in a confrontation, the reason for which never really became clear to me. After protracted negotiations between the parties involved, the work was continued, but the winter rains that arrived early that year had already turned the unfinished roads into a muddy sludge, with pools of water forcing people to either get their shoes wet or hop over them.

Crucial for making life more bearable was the possibility of improving the material living conditions in the camps. There has been significant variation in the quality of the houses I have visited, ranging from finished and well-furnished to those in which the traces of poverty were hard to miss. In those houses, the need for repairs and renovation was apparent, as the bare concrete floors and insufficient roofs provided little protection from the cold and damp. The winter months in particular reveal the insufficiencies of the material environment, as every year the heavy rain causes flooding that soaks the narrow streets and turns the slopes on which several of the camps are built into small rapids. Water finds its way into the houses, either under the front doors from the flooded streets due to the lack of a

proper sewage system, or through the roofs in those places where houses are still topped with zinc, as in Jal al-Bahar gathering in Lebanon and Jerash camp in Jordan.

The quality of both housing and its surroundings, and the possibilities to achieve a level that could be considered sufficient, affected not only everyday life but also the degree of contentment with the present place of dwelling more generally. When improving the conditions in the camp was not possible, for one reason or another, other options had to be considered. Farid, living in El Buss camp in Lebanon, had started to think that it would be best to sell the house and emigrate. Yet, as many others were also opting for emigration rather than staying, it had become increasingly difficult to find buyers for houses in the camps: "Before, it was easy to find a buyer, but now no. This house used to be worth of 60 000 dollars, now maybe 35 000. And there are many houses for sale. To travel legally, you need more money". The difficulties Farid had faced in renovating his house was by no means the only reason he had started to consider emigration, but it was one manifestation of his inability to attain the standard of living he hoped for in Lebanon. Building, renovating, or buying a house is a concrete investment in the future in the camp and, in Lebanon, many would rather save their money in the hope of emigrating.

The meaningful materiality of the compromised conditions

Despite the political connotations of their materiality, which link the camps to the right of return via their enforced temporariness, the refugee camps are first and foremost homes for the refugees living in them. When I talked with Raji about the meanings of the camps for their residents, he stressed precisely that:

> It's funny because, you look at examples such as Nahr el-Bared [Lebanon], or Yarmouk refugee camp [Syria], or even Jenin refugee camp [West Bank]. And those three spaces, mainly Nahr al-Bared and Jenin, when they were demolished, people did not ask to return to Palestine. People ask to return to Nahr el-Bared, you know. So what does this tell us, you know?

Though defined by daily inconveniencies and problems as described above, what is telling of the importance of the camp materialities is that when they are being rebuilt – like in Jenin in northern West Bank and Nahr el-Bared in northern Lebanon – they follow the same material form that has grown organically over the decades and made the camps the crowded and densely built places they are today.

These practices of rebuilding call into question the shared narrative that the camps should be demolished after the return becomes possible. Raji, who is an active

member of Campus in Camps, an initiative started in the West Bank to rethink the general understandings of the camps and the right of return, condemned this line of thinking, saying that the demolition of the camps would be an extremely violent act, "another Nakba", that would deny the importance of the life lived in exile by denouncing the materiality it has produced. Nassim, my key interlocutor in the West Bank, stressed the same point when he explained that the relation between the people and the landscape of exile should not be ignored, as the camps are familiar and formative, not the rural villages left behind in 1948. Both Raji and Nassim belong to the fourth generation of Palestinian refugees and, while their relation to pre-Nakba Palestine is purely discursive, the camps are the spaces that carry their memories and define their possibilities. The camps have thus become the refugees' heritage, in both the hermeneutic and the concrete meaning of the term. These views reflect how the meanings of the camps are much more manifold and much more connected to the lived realities than is depicted in the traditional views on return. Destroying the camps in the wake of the return would thus mean losing something important. As James Risser has noted: "return […] it is not getting back what one has lost, but always a new loss" (Risser 2012: 36).

5.2   Dwelling with others: the enabling community and disabling social control

> The community [in the camp] is like [the one in] a prison, a jail. In jail, you created strong friendships because you need someone to support you and you need someone to protect you. Sometimes you need someone to rely on, someone to eat with, like in jail. The camp is like a jail. The crisis we are living makes our relationships very strong. (Hassan, Dheisheh camp)

To someone unfamiliar with the Palestinian context, it might be startling that a prison is used as a positive comparison to characterize the community in the refugee camps. Prisons are easily associated with deviant and antisocial behavior, and though they can also house political figures and those who are called freedom fighters, as spaces they are nevertheless designed to delimit freedom and possibilities. For Palestinians, Israeli prisons are places where they are held without trial, where they are tortured, and where their children are taken on the basis of extremely flimsy reasons. However, as Hassan explained, Israeli prisons are also places in which to create networks, friendships that continue beyond their walls. And it is this side of a prison that is equated with the refugee camps, as camps are seen as encouraging the

same processes. Hassan, who uttered the words quoted above, explained how, especially at the beginning of exile, the refugees had to rely on one another to survive in the harsh conditions of the camps, and thus the relations between people were strong. Due to this solidarity, the community in the camps was also seen as qualitatively better than in the surrounding cities, where people did not know their neighbors or help one another in the same manner. The camp community was also the reason some preferred to live in the camp, even when their financial situation would have allowed them to move elsewhere.

However, the tightknit community in the camps was thought to have both its good and bad sides, and sometimes the social fabric was described as damaged, compared with the closeness and solidarity that had existed in the past. A community always comes into being in relation to the society surrounding it, and thus the perception held by those dwelling outside the camps played a part in how the socialities inside the camp were described. Regardless of whether the camp community was described in positive or negative terms, it was self-evidently part of my interlocutors' lived realities, and it was often referred to when considering the meaningfulness of continuing living in the camp. Understanding these different dimensions of communal life is crucial, as it is through living in a community that a "sense of the right and general good" is acquired (Risser 2012: 51; see also Gadamer 2013: 21). It is hence in the frame of the community in which ideas of a good life – or an undignified and dishonorable life for that matter – and the means of achieving it are negotiated.

The refugee community

In classical accounts of refugees, refugee camps have been seen as places where social relations have been damaged by the experienced dispossession and the dispersal of the communities that existed prior to it. Liisa Malkki has famously criticized this notion, describing the "national order of things", the understanding that ties people to their "proper" place within the system of nation-states, and maintains that the refugee, "in crossing an international border, he or she has lost connection with his or her culture and identity" (Malkki 1995: 11). In this view, the "proper place" that is lost when one becomes a refugee results in a degradation of morality (Malkki 1992: 32). This loss of morality results from being uprooted from the proper place, but also from the loss of a moral framework, that is, the community that controls the behavior of its members. In a critique of this understanding, Malkki,

in her work in Tanzania, has observed that the camp can also be used in constructing a sense of moral self (Malkki 1995) and in the Palestinian context anthropologist Nina Gren (2015) has observed that her Palestinian interlocutors in Dheisheh camp constructed their sense of moral superiority precisely on the experiences of Nakba and other injustices they had faced as a community since then (Gren 2015: 148–150).

In the case of Palestinian refugees, the loss of community due to exile was not as total as is often assumed in relation to the dispossessed. People did get separated from their neighbors, and even family members, when they fled from their homes and people either stayed behind or left in different directions, as was the case with Farid's father, who was the only one of his siblings who escaped from Palestine to Lebanon. It was, however, also common that families, and even village communities, stayed together in the upheavals of Nakba. When the camps started to take shape, they further gathered people from the same villages. Villagers formed their own *hara*, neighborhood, in the camps, composed of several extended families who came to inhabit houses next to one another. In this manner, old village socialities have been reproduced in the spatiality of refugee camps (Farah 1999: 125–126; Peteet 2005: 110–117, 123–124; Sayigh 1977), and the old villages are evoked when narrating the refugee identity. Jaber from Dheisheh repeated this discourse when he proudly explained the characteristics that were associated with people from different villages. In his opinion, people's personalities and capabilities were linked with their original village: some were good fighters, other had great academic capabilities, and yet others were good at working with the land.

The discourse of the ancestral villages is part of the refugees' political identity and has been reproduced in multiple ways (see Davis 2011). I encountered this discourse during one of my first visits to the camps, when a small girl standing in front of the youth center in Shatila introduced herself with a litany of names, stating her kin relations and ending with the name of her ancestral village, which she had only ever heard of. Similarly, when a friend told a European couple with whom he was chatting in a bar in Beirut that he was from Haifa, he was making a political statement that made his refugeeness known. When the young couple continued the conversation by asking what it was like there, it was up to me to explain that he had never actually been there, which resulted in puzzled looks from them. Naming the village of origin is not (only) about remembering the past and being nostalgic; it is a political statement reproducing the refugeeness and extending the past to the desired future: Palestinians have not forgotten where they come from and they make a claim to recreate that lost connection in the future. Though stating this connection is more

of a political act, often directed at outsiders, than an active part of everyday life, it has nevertheless been central in creating the present community in the camps.

Maintaining the connection to the ancestral villages has thus been an essential part of Palestinian refugee identity, yet the knowledge of the village socialities brought up differences between my fields. In the West Bank, where life is generally more politicized than in my other fields, the villages of origin were most eagerly reproduced, whereas in Lebanon and Jordan they came up only when I specifically asked about them. Some could easily name their ancestral village and talk about their family's history there but others, especially the younger refugees, did not necessarily have a great awareness of where it was located, how the family had lived there, and how they had traveled to the camp. For some, the name of the village was just an empty signifier, even though it is popularly assumed that those living in the camps are connected and committed to Palestine and its history.

Majida held this belief before she discussed the matter in her center for women and children in Baqa'a camp near the capital of Jordan. The center she directed was situated just outside the built-up area of Baqa'a, and she frequently went there to meet the employees and to give lessons to the children who came to receive complementary teaching and participate in cultural activities. When I joined her on a visit, the place was full of children and women having an activity day. They were singing songs by the famous Lebanese singer Fairouz, along with the Palestinian – *Mawtini* – and Jordanian national anthems. The walls were covered with drawings, maps of Palestine among them, and photos of the king and the crown prince of Jordan watched over the visitors. Herself an outsider to the camps, Majida was surprised to learn that the knowledge of Palestine among the camp residents was not on the level she had thought it would be:

> Always I thought that the identity, or that the love for Palestine is stronger than for us [Palestinians living outside the camps]. But no, I noticed that no, not at all. Because last time in my community center, we had a lesson […], I asked them, tell me about Palestine. Most of them, they don't know anything, nothing. Even though their parents are Palestinian. Because those, they are the third, no, the fourth generation.

The same had been noticed by Mona, herself in her twenties. She had been shocked by the lack of knowledge displayed by Palestinian refugees from Jordan who had visited her home camp Arroub. She explained to me in a disapproving tone that those she talked with could tell her nothing about their villages of origin, while she at the same time pointed out the different *hara* that were organized along village lines as we were walking around the camp. The reason for this "gap between generations"

experienced in Jordan was attributed to a lack of education on Palestine by a youth worker whose workshop I attended. Though the families transmitted the emotional bond, knowledge was described as lacking. The youth worker worked in an NGO that provided courses for Palestinian and Syrian refugees in Amman and she explained that in the 1980s a book on Palestine was still part of the curriculum, but that nowadays there was nothing: "There is still the emotional bond that gets transferred from one generation to another but no knowledge on what has happened and how the refugees have moved". Rosemary Sayigh has observed a similar absence of official teaching of Palestinian history across the Middle East, with the single exception of Syria (Sayigh 2014).

The connection to the historical communities of the ancestral villages is still maintained in different ways, but the camp community is, of course, central mainly in a more mundane sense, as the context in which everyday life is lived. Furthermore, these different spatialities that are reproduced in the camp community function on different levels: the recreated village communities reproduce a continuity that connects to pre-exile relations in Palestine, whereas the present ramifications of the camp community have been produced over the decades by the specific material and sociopolitical frames of life in the camps in the Middle Eastern context in which they exist.

Close-knit relations

The significant relations were often the positive factor that kept people in the camps, despite all the difficulties that camp life entailed. The closeness of the communal relations became evident in everyday practices. Neighbors, relatives, and friends living in the same area were present in multiple ways: they came to visit, and my interlocutors visited them. They shared chores and free time and, for example in Lebanon, the neighborhood women gathered in my host family's house to chat, drink coffee, prepare food, and share groceries with one another. The neighbors and the wider community formed a support network to turn to when there was a need for help, and there was an expectation that this help would be reciprocated. These relations were part of the natural order of the everyday, an inherent, built-in component of what it meant to live in the camps and gatherings. Though the tight relations could also be a source of annoyance and even anxiety, they were often viewed as a blessing, and as qualitatively better than the relations that existed in the towns and cities, or in the west. It was even explained to me that "the Western

people" would prefer to have what they called "Arab relations", which they described as a lock that connected relatives and friends and created the unit through and amid which life was lived.

Even those planning to emigrate from the camps in Lebanon usually stressed that this aspect of camp life was better than what they could hope for from a life in Europe. The proximity of family and friends was important; it was actually the only thing that made life in Lebanon better, though for many it was not enough to provide the possibility to continue living there. In Jordan, in turn, I heard of a refugee who had managed to become wealthy through a business he had started but who nevertheless continued to live in Jabal el-Hussein camp in Amman. The man's elderly mother refused to leave the camp because her friends and family lived there, and consequently the man had also stayed to be close to her, though he had an apartment in a better-off neighborhood in West Amman. A similar story was repeated in the West Bank, where Mona's mother would have preferred to live somewhere other than in Arroub camp, which she considered to be too close to Beit Ummar, the village where she had lived before getting married. Moving was out of the question though, as Mona's father insisted on staying close to his family and friends in the camp.

The importance of the camp community is also evident in the practice of refugees building new houses right outside the camp borders, which was common especially in the West Bank. By doing so, the refugee families could enhance their living conditions and get more space around them, both materially and socially, but also stay close to family and friends. The camp continued to be the locus of social relations even for someone who had moved out. And even for those who had lived their whole lives outside, the camp could still be of social importance. For example, Nassim lived in Doha city next to Dheisheh but spent his free time with one of the organizations working in the camp. Furthermore, in a dialogue presented as part of a project by Decolonizing Architecture Art Residency (DAAR), which aimed to get Dheisheh enlisted as a UNESCO world heritage site[41], the contributors suggested that "[l]ess crowded than Dheisheh, this 'refugee city' [Doha] lacks the social relations that exists in the camp", and claimed that refugees living in Doha still saw Dheisheh as a center for their social and political life[42].

The camps could thus provide a feeling of community and belonging, as has been discussed also by Nell Gabiam (2016: 96–97) and Randa Farah (1999: 183–184). Though obviously not true for everyone, as I also met people who strongly stressed that all of their friends were from outside the camps, the camps nevertheless could provide communal belonging. For example, a young woman I met in Majida's center

in Baqa'a camp noted how in the camps everyone knows one another, while outside the camps you do not even know your neighbor, and they would not look after you if something was wrong. She saw that the camp formed a family, a metaphor I had also heard repeated in the West Bank. The same differentiation between the camp and the city was brought up in Marka camp, located just outside Amman. A women's center employee pondered the dissimilarities between camp life and city life and concluded that it was the social bonds that made the difference. She believed that in the camp the family bonds were stronger, as were the relations between neighbors: "My sister is living outside the camp, and there you don't know even your nextdoor neighbors. Here, if you don't see them in two days, you know something is wrong". While at times it felt that relations were stronger in discourse than in practice, that stressing the communality was a way to maintain what was considered the ideal sociality, the discourse nevertheless had a correspondence with the realities of camp life. The decades lived in the camps combined with the crowdedness meant that people knew their neighbors and what was going on in their lives, which could provide a sense of security and significant relations that made everyday life easier.

These tight community relations were, in fact, utilized in resolving conflicts that emerged among the camp residents, without the interference of the official law-enforcing bodies (see also Hanafi 2008). When my apartment in Dheisheh camp was broken into one night, the matter was handled by bringing together the culprit and his family with the owner of the house, with the camp elders mediating the session. By the morning, they had managed to identify the person responsible for the break-in by picking out his car on surveillance camera footage provided by the owner of a shop a few block from where I lived, and the landlord announced angrily that half of the camp already knew what had happened and the other half would know soon, and that no one would treat the person with respect once they knew what he had done. In a community where a good reputation and respectability are in direct relation to success in life, the consequences of losing them can be severe. In the process of the landlord and the culprit handling the break-in, I even started to feel sorry for the young man who had committed the offence. In addition to his having trespassed on my landlord's property, he had clearly been drunk while doing so, which only increased the disapproval of those who came to know about the incident. It turned out that he and his friends had been using the place for drinking – he kept asking for vodka when I confronted him after letting him in from the balcony on to which he had somehow managed to climb – and was not aware that there was someone living in the apartment.

As well as the camp elders, the camp's Popular Committees were also involved in communal problem solving, as they facilitated discussions between families in conflict situations. Though manifesting the camp community's ability to self-manage, this did not always result in fair treatment, as was the case with a shooting incident in El Buss camp, when the Popular Committee protected the perpetrator from arrest because he happened to be friends with the right people. Nevertheless, this type of communal handling of conflicts was still favored over getting outsiders, meaning the police, involved. Even in the West Bank, where the camps are not excluded from the surrounding sovereign in the same way as in Lebanon, the PA police rarely entered them. They had also been prevented from doing so, as was recollected by Rana, a university student in her late twenties doing a master's degree in law: she remembered that Dheisheans had fought off the police a couple of years previously when they were trying to arrest someone from the camp. When I mentioned this incident to someone else, he defended the refugees' actions by noting that the police usually tried to enter the camps in the same manner as Israeli soldiers did, that is, without consulting the community beforehand.

In Jordan, where camps are closely surveilled by the government's security apparatuses and where it is known that *Mukhabarat*, the intelligence agency, has offices either inside or just by the camps, the police were not a common presence inside the camps when conflicts took place. Amal recollected that once there was a violent fight in Gaza camp, with one person lying on the ground and "lots of screaming, and women and boys and men", and she called the police to inform them but never saw the officers arrive: "After everything is finished, they come". This reluctance to interfere in practice made the self-organization within the camps a necessity.

The transforming communal life

"The relations between people are not as they used to be", Abdul declared as we were sitting in the salon of his house in Burj Shemali camp. He continued that, before, everybody had liked one another. When someone was sick, everyone from the camp came to visit and help, but not anymore. They didn't care. Abdul, who was four years old when his family moved to Burj Shemali camp in 1954 and had thus witnessed both the material and the social changes, was not positive about the transformation that had happened in the camp community. He saw that the once

strong bond that had connected the people had been fractured, resulting in indifference toward others' situations.

The social life within the camps has, naturally, transformed over the decades. At the beginning, the camp recreated the traditional ways by bringing people from the same village together but, as my field assistant explained, the camp also connected people from different villages and thus brought together different understandings and ways of doing things that had not interacted before. The camps were places to encounter new people; they were places that offered possibilities to create new identities and new beginnings, as Simon Turner has noted (Turner 2016). Over the years, camps have enabled the creation of new social connections, as those based on party membership have to an extent replaced the old community bonds. The shared refugeehood has tied people in the camps together and has been a source of solidarity. Though many, like Abdul, thought that the relations were not as solid as they used to be, there were variations in how they were viewed, and this seemed to at least partly depend on the position the person had in the network of support that the community could provide.

Well-placed in West Bank society thanks to his political affiliation, Hassan was one of those who described the solidarity within the camp community as something that had carried on up to the present day. Historically, he saw that the solidarity had been born out of circumstances, that people who found themselves in a similar situation bonded and formed a support network that made life in the harsh reality of the camp easier. These community networks also stretched outside the camp borders:

> We support each other when we are outside the camp. We support each other without, we don't look at the political color, no. We support each other. Because we regard ourselves as one unit because we are these refugees who suffered a lot. […] We support each other, say, in finding jobs. Because we know, give someone a job, you give him the opportunity to start his life, to have a house, to have a family, their future. In general, we support each other in this field so much without, you know, without any known policy. It's something inside you.

Hassan described the support as something intrinsic to those living in the camp community though, in practice, political affiliation affected how the benefits of the support network were distributed. The common discourse in the West Bank, nevertheless, was that the experienced refugeehood was the source of the solidarity and support that helped in surviving the everyday and in building the futures in the camps and beyond.

The same was stressed by Munir – in his late twenties and an active member of a refugee organization – but he placed the communal solidarity more in the past, of which he could not even have vivid memories, the point of rupture being the Oslo Accords of 1993 and 1995:

> Before Oslo, there was a collective life in the camp. Because we have faced the same displacement, we are facing the same politics. We are under the threat of being killed, being arrested, being injured. We are sharing the same suffering. After Oslo, it has changed. Oslo has created an elite of Palestinian people. There was a Palestinian elite that was raised after Oslo that is not in a direct contact with the Palestinian people who are suffering.

Munir is from a younger generation than Hassan, and he lived his teenage years during the Second Intifada, which itself was a backlash against the broken promises of Oslo. Munir also worked in an organization advocating the rights of refugees and was clearly frustrated with the policies of the PA and how they had affected the camp community in which he lived. He saw that the community had become more individualistic, that people were more concerned with their daily problems than with the political struggle and the collective life that had earlier characterized the refugee camp as a community.

Similarly in Lebanon, the communal solidarity between camp refugees was described more as a thing of the past that was nostalgically remembered by the older refugees, such as Abdul, rather than as part of present-day reality. The present reality in the camps was described by referring to the social and psychological problems created by the economic and social pressure under which Palestinians were living. The problems faced in the camps were reflected in the communal life and could have tangible and far-reaching consequences for people's possibilities. Rima, an English teacher in her late twenties, saw that the bad social environment and the problems in families even compromised children's ability to learn and concentrate in school:

> Here if you go to the camps, the social situation is very bad. I'm talking to you [about it] because I'm living in a camp and I face very, very hard problems, especially in Rashidieh [where I live]. I taught teenagers, students [there]. […] Because, I told you, the social environment here is very miserable.

Rima's own experiences of life in the camp were one of the reasons she had applied for a green card with her family, to emigrate to the United States. She wanted her children to grow up in a better environment with better possibilities than she could offer them in the camp, where she witnessed many social problems, especially among the teenagers she used to teach in an UNRWA school. The reality of the camps was

defined by the lack of opportunities faced by Palestinians in Lebanon and the immanent presence of a violent conflict that characterized life in Lebanon in general, which made it impossible for many to imagine that they would be able to live a good life in the camps. It was, however, also the social environment of the camps that had come to weigh in favor of leaving, despite the hope of staying close to family. Farid, who had been trying to sell his house in El Buss, even considered that living in the camps made people ill, and not only because of the material quality of the dwellings but because of the pressure people experienced in the crowded environments, which, together with the bad socioeconomic situation, just increased frustration and the emergence of conflicts between residents.

"They always talk"

Dan Bulley (2014) has called community "the inevitable result of the unavoidable sociality of being" (p. 67), which can provide "greater agency, meaning and mobility gained through the sharing of a space of coexistence" (p. 77). However, community can also impose control over its members, and thus shrink rather than widen the horizon of possible actions. The power wielded by the community is amplified in societies where self is first and foremost relational (see Joseph 1999), and thus reputation and honor are highly valued and can affect the available possibilities in, say, the field of employment. In the case of the break-in at my apartment in Dheisheh, the landlord considered it a punishment in itself that "people in the camp knew".

Living in such an environment could thus feel delimiting, as even personal issues could become the property of the wider community through people gossiping and being judgemental. For Amal, the people in Jerash/Gaza camp were part of the reason she felt trapped there. As a 26-year-old unmarried woman in a camp where the majority of females married before they turned 20, she had clearly felt the pressure of the surrounding community on her life choices. Though currently living in the camp with her family, Amal was born abroad, where her parents were working at the time. She had moved to the camp at the age of ten, when her family returned to Jordan. When I met her, it had been six months and ten days since she had returned from the Gulf, where she had been working as a secretary. Amal would have preferred to stay there but was forced to return to Jordan because her brother did so, and as a woman she could not continue living there on her own. Since her return, she felt that she was not properly living, and she was clearly frustrated by the

limited freedom she had in the conservative environment of the camp, which trapped her in her home and prevented her from spending her time as she wished. In the camp she felt that she could not choose when to go out and with whom, and whether to use a hijab or not:

> I don't like this thing about the camp that they talk. For example, if you came late, they talk, they always talk: you came late, you came late: if you went alone to anywhere, they talk.

Hence, the close community was not always viewed as a blessing. On the contrary, sometimes the community was something that limited one's possibilities in life due to the social control it practiced. For Amal, the camp was not only a place to cherish because of significant relations but also a place to escape from, in order to live in an environment where she would not be judged and would thus have more options in life. The same was arguably true for the majority of my younger interlocutors, for varying reasons. Though this social control was always there, especially for women, there were also other aspects of the camp reality that people hoped to escape from: the poverty, the lack of possibilities, and the presence of violence and humiliation.

Though Dheisheh forms a different type of community with a less conservative underpinning, it was noted there also that everyone knows everyone's business, and if one person knows, then the others will soon know as well. It was confessed to me quite a few times that, regardless of the shared discourse on continuing living in the camp until the return, in reality many hoped to move out, to get more privacy and gain proper independence, away from the close monitoring they were subjected to within the camp community. Tellingly, in Lebanon all my female interlocutors preferred to go out of the camp to relax. They spent time in the cafés near the corniche or went for walks in the old city of Tyre to have a short break from the watchful eyes, the crowdedness, and the noise of the camp.

An example of the social control practiced in the camp communities is the process of purchasing and consuming alcohol. In Jordan, finding alcohol is in general more difficult as the majority of shops do not sell it, but in the Bethlehem area and in Tyre, where beer and other alcoholic drinks are easily available, the camp community's disapproval of the consumption of alcohol meant that refugees could not simply walk to the closest shop that sold it. Yet it was commonly known that many in Dheisheh did drink, and that they frequented a shop called Ricardo in Beit Jala to purchase it. Still, if a person from Dheisheh happened to enter the shop when another camp resident was already there, they both had to pretend they were there for some other reason, even when both of them knew perfectly well that they had

not traveled that far to buy bread and hummus. Similarly, in Lebanon it was seen necessary to drive away from the central area where it was more likely that a buyer would encounter someone who would recognize them and might then spread the information among the camp community. Furthermore, the empty bottles could not be thrown in with the household waste but needed to be wrapped in a plastic bag and discreetly disposed of in a garbage bin further away from the house, so that there could be no direct association with the person who had bought them.

Strangers in the community

On our evening walk, Rana declared that she did not think that the camp was a good place to live in anymore: "Strange people live in the camp now; they are not from the camp. […] [They move there] because it's cheaper and they don't have to pay for electricity and water. […] Many people, they are not refugees, they are strangers". She continued that no one actually knew who was living in the camp and that the "outsiders" created problems by misbehaving, causing those living in the surrounding areas to consider camps as "bad places". Though only in her twenties, she was convinced that things were better before, when all the people in the camp were refugees and they all knew one another. Therefore, when Rana's father decided to expand their home inside the camp, to add another floor to their family's apartment instead of saving the money to find a place outside the camp, she was not happy. Rana had experienced life outside when she had been doing an internship in Europe. All of her friends lived outside the camp and she felt it would be better if they also found a place in what she considered to be a better environment. Rana's family had already tried to improve their living conditions in the camp: the house was painted in a bright color and it even had a small garden with trees on the small lot between the concrete fence and the house. Though Rana understood that the price of land would make it difficult for her father to provide the same standard of living outside the camp, especially if they wanted to continue to live in an urban area, she would still have preferred to live somewhere else: "I don't think that the […] camp is healthy, this is my opinion".

In the crowdedness of the camp, familiarity with the people surrounding you can create a sense of security. The possibility to locate a person in a wider social network (e.g. that and that person's son, the daughter of your neighbor's cousin, a relative of the camp shopkeeper) translates into a sense of control in a society where a good reputation is essential for succeeding in life. In this sense, the camp forms a

community that resembles more of a closed village society, whereas in the city people are more likely to live surrounded by people they do not personally know. Being an outsider in this type of community creates vulnerability, as one is not protected by the networks of familiarity, and one is not entirely trusted, or can even be treated with suspicion, if the control created by a linking person is missing. In the tightly-built community of the camp, being 'an outsider' simply means that one is not known by the community. A person can be an outsider even if they are Palestinian, as became evident in the West Bank, where Rana considered those not from the camp as "strange people" causing trouble, and where Hassan described the non-refugees as having a different mentality than the refugees, who he saw as forming a support network to help one another out in rough times.

In Lebanon, Mahmoud had experienced this otherness in his early days in the camp, when he had felt like an outsider after his family arrived there from Jordan in the aftermath of Black September. Born in Ramallah, Mahmoud falls outside the official support structures as well: he is one of the non-registered refugees, and thus not entitled to the full services of UNRWA. This unstable status had caused him financial problems, as the fees for renewing the residency permits for himself and his children – who had a Lebanese mother but were still stateless as women cannot pass on citizenship in Lebanon – had increased to the extent that he could not afford them. The same has been experienced by a number of Palestinians who have been forced to cross borders multiple times due to war and violence and have lost their papers along the way. However, as Mahmoud had lived almost all his life in Rashidieh, he felt that he was not an outsider in a communal sense anymore and referred to the people in the camp as the only positive aspect of living in Lebanon.

Rather, the new outsiders in the camps were the Syrians and the Syrian Palestinians, who were blamed for making the situation worse for the local Palestinians. Yasser, a security forces director in Burj Shemali camp, saw that the arrival of the Syrians was a reason Palestinians could not resolve conflicts between themselves in the same manner as before, and he further noted that the number of problems they had in the camp had risen for the same reason. Marwa, herself a Palestinian refugee from Damascus, had noticed these negative attitudes even among the children in the camp, who engaged in name-calling in the streets of Rashidieh. Similarly, two Palestinian families, who had fled from Yarmouk camp and ended up in Tyre, had encountered the accusation that they had come to Lebanon only to receive the benefits and services provided for refugees, not because they had no other choice. Being seen as an outsider thus affected how someone was encountered by others. When the situation was difficult to begin with, and had only grown worse,

it was easy to blame 'the newcomers': Syrian refugees, with whom the scarce resources had to be shared, and whose presence triggered the implementation of policies and practices that also had consequences for the Palestinians living in Lebanon.

5.3   Part of the surrounding landscape: the relative location of the camps

Though Palestinian camps are in many ways on the threshold of exclusion, they are simultaneously relational to their surroundings in multiple ways that manifest inclusion. Refugees move in and out of the camps, they cross their borders to work and meet friends and family, they build and buy houses outside camp borders, and their leisure time is often spent outside of them. My interlocutors did not discuss the camps as isolated places but defined them through the wider social and material environment of which they were part. The everyday lives of the refugees are thus formed both inside and outside the camps, and through the relations between the two. What forms these relations take is integral in determining the possibilities available to the refugees, the forms that everyday life can take, and how the refugees are able to imagine the routes their future could, or should, take. A camp's surroundings thus emerge as an important dimension for understanding both its function as a space and how it frames the everyday life of its dwellers.

Urban conditions

Due to their growth, Palestinian camps today are neighborhoods or even small towns in their own right, with shops, restaurants, schools, hospitals, vegetable markets, and other services available within their boundaries. All the camps that are part of this research comprise several neighborhoods (*hara*) that are more for residential use, but they also have streets full of shops, food sellers, and coffee shops. The outer perimeter of El Buss camp in Lebanon, for example, is lined with shops of different kinds – selling clothes, bread, vegetables, and meat – that serve both the camp dwellers and others who are attracted by their cheaper prices. The shops inside the camps, however, serve mainly Palestinian refugees, as the Lebanese do not easily enter the camps due to the communal divisions that exist in the country. Palestinian camps are a clear example of the urbanization of refugee spaces (Sanyal 2012, 2014),

both in themselves and in relation to their surroundings. The majority of Palestinian refugee camps are in urban areas, on the outskirts of towns and cities or even in the middle of them, surrounded by other neighborhoods.

In fact, anthropologist Michel Agier has noted that Palestinian refugee camps deserve special attention because of their singular urbanization. According to him, these camps are the most developed model of the so-called city-camps that defy the traditional understanding of camp spaces (Agier 2011: 53, 58). The urbanization has, however, been a gradual process. In the occupied West Bank, both Aida and Dheisheh camps were set up on the lands outside Bethlehem, but over their 70 years the city and its surrounding municipalities have encircled them and made them part of the urban landscape. The camps and gatherings are thus a de facto part of the city and its social and material relations. Of the 19 official camps in the West Bank, only a couple can be called rural, and the same is the case with Lebanon's 12 camps and the ten official camps in Jordan, where all four camps established in the aftermath of 1948 are in urban settings. The six emergency camps established in Jordan after 1967, which are also the camps visited in this research, are not in the midst of urban landscapes yet to call them rural would be an overstatement. Furthermore, both the West Bank and Lebanon are relatively small areas where distances are never long, though in practice moving around, especially in the West Bank, can be difficult. Nevertheless, due to the proximity of the towns and villages, Palestinian camps do not follow the presumption that camps are established in isolated places, far from cities and other centers (Turner 2016: 3). Palestinian camps are not physically isolated from the host community but rather exist side by side with it.

This urban nature of Palestinian refugee spaces was clearly manifested by the camps in which I conducted fieldwork. In Lebanon, El Buss and Burj Shemali camps are clearly part of the urban landscapes of Tyre, even when the refugees themselves usually referred to the city as a separate place. Even Rashidieh, which is a short distance from the actual city, is easily reachable. While many of the gatherings are outside the city, they are lined up along the coastal highway that runs between Saida and Tyre, and are thus easy to reach on public transportation. In the West Bank, Kalandia, Aida, and Dheisheh are clearly urban camps, the first being physically attached to Ramallah and the other two forming part of the urban landscape of Bethlehem. The most rural of the camps I visited was Arroub, but even there one can get to Bethlehem in 20 minutes on public transportation. Arroub is right beside the bypass between Jerusalem and Hebron/al-Khalil, which is also used by the settlers living in the southern parts of the West Bank. Though at times the use of such highways has been restricted to Israelis, in 2016 Palestinian buses running

between Bethlehem and Hebron were allowed to use it, reducing the temporal distance between the two cities considerably.

The three camps in which I did fieldwork in Jordan – Baqa'a, Marka, and Jerash/Gaza – are emergency camps that were established after 1967, and all of them are in less urban surroundings than the 1948 camps. Still, only Jerash camp is clearly outside the capital, next to the city of Jerash, which is well known for its Roman ruins. The other two are on the outskirts of Amman and what tells of their integration into the capital's urban landscape is that there are direct bus connections with the camps. Baqa'a even has its own bus station, whereas Marka camp forms the terminus of a bus route.

There are, however, differences in how uninterrupted the relation between the camp and the city is, as physical demarcation and the permit system affect accessibility. The boundaries of the camps are sometimes blurred and sometimes clearly enforced; sometimes there is a clear material demarcation, while in other cases the borders are more abstract, encrypted in the social and political relations that mark the exceptionality of the camp spaces. In Lebanon, the camps can be divided into those outsiders need a permit to enter and those where this kind of governance mechanism is not employed. The division is materially manifested by the presence of Lebanese military checkpoints that stand at the entrances and exits of camps where a permit is needed. In practice, however, the camps are relatively accessible, as the Lebanese soldiers check the permit numbers rather randomly and, even if they do happen to check and entry is denied, there are other ways into the camps. For example, in El Buss camp there are several small pathways through which it is easy to get in without a permit, either by walking or on a scooter. The permit system is applied only to outsiders, both non-Lebanese Palestinians and other non-Lebanese. The Lebanese Palestinians can come and go as they please, but they nevertheless experience a disconnect because they have to partake in the control practices, to present their IDs and submit themselves to surveillance if required by the soldiers.

In Jordan, on the other hand, the relation of the camps to their surroundings is rather different. In fact, Palestinian camps in Jordan do not seamlessly fit with any of the defining features of a refugee camp as described by Michel Agier (from Turner 2016: 3): they are not extra-territorial but are a connected part of the city landscapes. Nor do they form an exception in an Agambenian sense because the majority of their inhabitants are Jordanian citizens. Though social exclusion does exist, it is not as comprehensive as in Lebanon, due to the sheer number of people of Palestinian origin in the country. In Jordan, I met a Palestinian refugee from Lebanon who marveled at how the Palestinian camps she had visited with her fellow workshop

participants did not have checkpoints or any other form of visible military presence. She herself was from one of the most surveilled camps in Lebanon and was thus used to connoting camps with such apparatuses.

For my interlocutors, the urbanity of the camp was an important factor, and many could not imagine living in villages as they were so used to the city environment. A remote location can affect the economic situation of a camp, as employment opportunities are often scarcer, but in the West Bank the location becomes experienced most clearly in the way in which it relates to the surrounding occupation. The occupation frames all aspects of everyday life, and thus the camp spaces cannot be discussed separately from it. It affects Palestinians' sense of security and the imagined possibilities loom large. It is these specific consequences of location that I turn to next.

Surrounded by occupation

Arroub camp in southern West Bank faces many problems precisely because of its location. Its spatial disadvantages are often related to its location in Areas B and C, B being under Palestinian civil rule but under Israeli military control, and C being totally under Israeli control. The Area C location means that there is the constant threat of land confiscation, which at times materializes, for example in April 2019 when Israel issued an order to confiscate lands for a settlement road that would end up isolating Arroub camp and the villages of Beit Ummar and Halhul, from which areas the land would be taken[43]. In addition to this faceless presence of occupation via military orders, the occupation is also corporeally there in the form of Israeli soldiers who are stationed at a military watchtower on the other side of the highway from the entrance to the camp. The highway is used by some of the most extremist settlers[44] in the whole of the West Bank, those living in Hebron and the surrounding settlements who commute to Jerusalem to work and to visit the Old City. Mona once explained that there used to be trees growing by the highway, but the Israeli soldiers cut them down to prevent boys from the camp throwing rock at settlers' cars from them. The inhabitants of these same settlements used to cross through Dheisheh and Doha but after the Oslo Accords the bypass was built to stop them entering the Palestinian urban centers located in Area A.

According to UNRWA reports, Arroub is the camp that experiences the most frequent incursions by Israeli soldiers, with them entering almost every night and sometimes even during the day to arrest people and disturb the camp residents[45].

The presence of soldiers delimits Palestinians' access to their surroundings, and Mona explained how the fields across the street from the camp, a popular spot for picnics, especially during the summer, were not as easily accessed as they used to be because soldiers would enter the area and fire shots, thus preventing people from using the place and depriving them of the possibility of a popular leisure activity.

Figure 4 An Israeli watchtower outside Arroub

A similar presence of occupying forces can be felt in Aida camp, where the separation wall encircles the camp on two sides. The proximity of the main checkpoint between Jerusalem and Bethlehem – Checkpoint 300 – and the separation wall means that in Aida there is also the constant presence of Israeli

soldiers, which at times escalates into clashes that cause injuries. The watchtower at the end of the Hebron road that is blocked by the separation wall is a common destination of demonstrations, and because Aida is situated by the side of the road, teargas and shooting directed at demonstrators disturbs those living in the camp. It is the same case in Kalandia camp, just a few hundred meters from the Kalandia checkpoint separating Jerusalem from Ramallah. Nada, whose family lives just by the road leading to the checkpoint, explained that they have to close all the doors and windows whenever there is a demonstration, to prevent teargas and the smoke from burning tires from entering their home.

In the autumn of 2015, when stabbing attacks targeting Israeli soldiers increased the violence in the West Bank and Jerusalem, the life of those living near the checkpoints was severely disturbed. Nada recollected how "they [Israeli soldiers] would come in the evening and leave by dawn, the shooting would literally keep going till the dawn, until we heard it stopped. Then we could go to sleep". The proximity of the checkpoint created an atmosphere of fear. The possibility of Israeli incursions into Kalandia caused its residents to be alarmed, especially at night. Nada's parents would always worry when she was out with friends in Ramallah, stressing that she should come home early because the soldiers might enter the camp.

Regardless of the area in which they are located, or whether they are close to checkpoints or settlements, the camps are always targeted by the occupying Israeli forces in a different manner than the Palestinian urban areas surrounding them, and they have been ever since the Israeli occupation started. Getting killed is an ever-present threat for those living in the occupied territories, and those in the camps are particularly vulnerable. A marker of this is the pictures of martyrs that can be found painted on the walls in the camps, a reminder of the young lives that have been lost to the occupation.

When I was doing fieldwork in the spring of 2016, the second half of the previous year was still fresh in people's minds. The year had been by far the bloodiest in the West Bank since the Second Intifada[46], as the knife attacks led to the perpetrators being systematically killed. Of the 175 Palestinians who were killed during that year in the whole of Israel/Palestine, 49 were refugees[47]. My interlocutors had lost people they knew and even close friends. Once, a friend who had been in the West Bank at the time recalled how the atmosphere had been extremely tense, and how people I had come to know as easy-going and witty had been distraught, disoriented and nervy. The friend told me about one occasion when Israeli soldiers had shot a boy in the head inside one of the camps, and he needed to be carried down to the main street as the ambulance could not access the camp's narrow alleys. By the time those

carrying him reached the ambulance, the boy's brains had leaked out onto them. That people I knew had been the ones who had experienced this was almost unimaginable. It exemplifies how traumatic experiences are part of the everyday in the camps, and in occupied Palestine in general, even when they are not highlighted. Death, injury, and trauma are there as a lingering presence, as something that has occurred and as something that can touch people's lives again at any moment, no matter how much they try to avoid situations in which the threat is intensified.

It is not, however, only the violence of the occupier that affects life, but also the permit regime imposed by Israel. Kalandia's location, on the border between Jerusalem and the areas under the Palestinian Authority, has created this type of disturbance. Those living in the part of Kalandia that is on the Jerusalem side have blue IDs – the so-called Jerusalem ID – whereas those on the other side of the road, where the actual camp is located, have green IDs, which are for those living in the rest of the West Bank (on Israel's ID system, see Tawil-Souri 2011). Green IDs are held by those under the PA's mandate, which means, for example, that they are unable to enter Jerusalem without a separate permit. In practice, the location of Kalandia means that Palestinians living next to one another are under different jurisdictions. Some people exploit this situation, and Nada mentioned that at times it had escalated into conflicts:

> The guys who live here in these neighborhoods on Jerusalem side, they always start fights with guys from the other side because they think that the [Palestinian] authority can take you [the ones with green IDs], they can control you but they cannot control us [with blue IDs]. Even though they are Palestinians, but just because they hold the blue identity, they assume that we're on our own. They think they are higher and better.

Nada's family was among those with the blue Jerusalem ID. In 2006, they were forced to move out from the camp precisely because of this division between the different types of ID. As holders of the blue ID, they received a letter from the Israeli officials stating that if they continued living outside the borders of Jerusalem their IDs would be annulled, meaning that they would be unable even to enter Jerusalem without separate permits, which are hard to get. Thus, they had to move across the street from the camp, a few hundred meters from their more spacious home inside it. Though the blue ID allows more freedom of movement than the green one, as it makes it possible to cross to the Israeli side of the Green Line, it also brings financial burdens. Nada's frustration with holding a blue ID went as far as her preferring to have a green one:

People with green IDs always say that hey, you're lucky, you can go to al-Aqsa every day and you can go to Jerusalem and you can work inside with a higher salary. But for me, I look at it differently because, you know, I wanna give up the blue ID and get a green one because we get annoyed of the high amount of taxes we have to pay for Israel, plus health insurance every month. That's how I look at it. […] Plus, we don't get any privileges from the [Israeli] government. If we'd had the citizenship that would be different. Now we only pay and get nothing.

The relativity of isolation

Even though those camps that are further away from urban areas are usually easily reachable on public transportation, the relative nature of this reachability became evident in discussions with those living further from the cities. Jerash camp in Jordan, usually referred to as Gaza camp because of the origin of its residents, is the most isolated of the camps I visited during my fieldwork, and this, together with some of its other qualities, affected how it was perceived as a place of residence. The distances involved restricted girls and women especially, whose movement was more closely monitored by the camp's conservative community than that of boys and men. Two sisters, in whose house I spent time in the camp, both explained that many families considered it to be too dangerous for women to travel to the capital on a daily basis, especially in the dark, which made them more bound to the camp than men. From a young age, men in general are allowed more freedom to move, and at the weekends many young men from the camp could be seen in Amman, spending time in Rainbow Street, Jabal Amman's famous gathering point, with its many coffee shops, cafés, and restaurants.

Women, on the other hand, can find it difficult even to commute to work in Amman, which is an hour's drive away. The camp's location on the outskirts of Jerash together with the social control delimiting the movement of women meant that the experiences of my two key interlocutors in the camp were very different. Amal was tied to her family's house in the camp, having little possibilities to work in Amman or spend time away from home as she wanted. In contrast, Karim, of approximately the same age, could live alone in Amman and pursue different paths with more ease. Though he had a lower education level than Amal, he had several projects he was working on, and has had even more since I finished my fieldwork. As well as this work, he was a freelance photographer and translator. Though his positive attitude no doubt facilitated his exploration of the different options, with him believing that through determination and by being aware of the existing

limitations one could find one's way in life, his position as a male meant that he had better resources, both mental and social, with which to do so than Amal.

In contrast, in Kofor Badda, which is the first Palestinian gathering one passes after exiting the coastal highway when approaching Tyre from the north, the distance to the closest camp where many of the services were located was one of the problems faced by the community. Buses coming from Saida frequently passed the gathering and would reach El Buss camp in 20 or so minutes, at a cost of 1000 liras (ab. 50 euro cents in 2015), but for families with little or no stable income, this would be too large a financial burden. The same reality was described by Mohammad, when we were sitting outside his house in Shabriha gathering, which is right on the border of the urban area of Tyre. Being a political leader in the community, he was well aware of the problems faced by the refugees living in the gathering. Not recognized by UNRWA as official camps, gatherings lacked many of the services that those living in recognized camps could easily walk to. There is no elementary school in Shabriha, which means that children need to travel to El Buss camp to study beyond sixth grade. Mohammad explained that it was extremely difficult for many families to support their children's continued education because they could not afford the daily bus journeys, which resulted in dropouts.

In the West Bank, on the other hand, the relativity of location emerges from the Israeli policies of "enclavisation" (Falah 2005) that fracture and separate Palestinian communities, and severely limit their movement both by physically stalling their mobility and by engendering an atmosphere of fear that something might happen, especially at checkpoints. The occupation has thus created forced localism (Taraki & Giacaman 2006) and, in this archipelago of Palestinian localities, living in an urban versus a rural area, or if one's village, camp, or town is surrounded by the wall, settlements, or multiple checkpoints, can be a matter of life or death. In the tiny West Bank, where physical distances are never long, reachability is entirely related to the occupation and its policies of separation, closure, land confiscation, and violence (e.g. Allen 2008; Bishara 2015; Peteet 2016). Palestinian author Raja Shehadeh (2008: xix–xx) melancholically acknowledges that these processes have made Palestinian enclaves "more and more like ghettos" and that they have deprived Palestinians of the possibility to know their land: "As our Palestinian world shrinks, that of the Israelis expands".

As all these cases exemplify, physical location can only partly explain how the location of a camp affects how life there is experienced, as it is the intersection of gender, community, family, economic position, political realities, *and* physical location that creates the horizon of possibilities. If one has income and a means of

transportation, it means little to live further away from services, but for those in the same area who do not have such resources the location is much more pivotal. Similarly, if the family and the wider community give someone the freedom to determine their own actions, the location does not emerge as such a key factor. The Palestinian refugee communities are by no means a monolith in this regard, and though the movement of my female interlocutors tended to be more closely monitored than that of their male peers, many still had the freedom to move around, albeit naturally within the frame set by the community and the family and, in the case of the West Bank, the occupation.

The politics of location

The location not only get its meanings through the community, but also the other way around: the camp community is always negotiated in relation to the surrounding communities. This was brought up repeatedly in Dheisheh, where the proximity of Bethlehem, and the Christian villages surrounding it, was seen to have had a favorable impact on the molding of the camp and its community. Hassan, my interlocutor who had recently moved to a new house outside the camp's borders with his family, described the uniqueness of the place where Dheisheh was located and why it was, according to him, different from all the other camps in the West Bank and the Gaza Strip:

> Each camp is affected by its surrounding environment. Bethlehem city is a mixed city between Muslims and Christians, and during the 50s and 60s the dominating political thought in this area was the Baath, like the one in Iraq, then came the communist, and after the communist came the left as part of the communists. This thought was dominating in this area. In addition to that mixture between Muslims and Christians, this multicultural life, the camp became a little bit different from the others. Why, because this thought has affected the life of people, the leftist thought has affected the life of people and created the situation that this camp is more, let's say, progressive on the intellectual level. This does not mean that the others are backward, but the point is that the location of this camp in a very different city in Palestine with mixed culture between Muslims and Christians, and the political thought that was dominating in this area, the left and Marxist and communist thought, has affected the life of people and made this camp different than other camps that are in remote areas, or around cities where the Islamic thought dominated.

Dheisheh was often discussed as a special case among the camps, mainly due to its leftist political affiliation and its active role on the political front and in opposing the occupation. Though this role has made Dheisheh into a leader among the camps, with its views listened to and then adopted by the others, it had also made it vulnerable in the face of the occupying forces. Israeli incursions are common, arbitrary arrests take place frequently, and many have been wounded and even killed by Israeli soldiers. Manifesting this attitude, in the autumn of 2016 an Israeli captain threatened to render all the youths in the camp disabled[48].

It is in the West Bank that camp location has the most profound effects on daily life, with spatial divisions and the presence of the occupying forces endangering Palestinians in different ways, but also in Jordan and Lebanon the locality of the camp – or gathering – defines the possibilities available to the refugees living in it. The remoteness from the capital limits employment opportunities, and though Beirut in particular was sometimes despised as a place where everyone was too busy, the people were unfriendly, and the food was bad, the location of Tyre nevertheless meant that there were fewer options available for Palestinians to find employment. Furthermore, in Lebanon, the location could also have similar life-threatening qualities as in the West Bank. During the 2006 war, my host family had to flee from their home in a gathering to El Buss camp because it was near a petrol station, all of which were bombed by Israel when it targeted southern Lebanon and other Hezbollah strongholds.

5.4   Camp as an identity: defining the camps and camp dwellers

It was early afternoon, and I was heading to Burj Shemali camp to visit a friend at whose place I had promised to spend the night. I left my host family's house and walked the short distance to El Buss roundabout, which was busy, as usual, with people waiting for taxis and buses to take them to their destinations. The noise of cars honking in search of customers surrounded me as I approached the spot by El Buss from where the shared taxis known as services waited to gather enough customers to begin the journey toward the camp. While I was waiting, a taxi stopped alongside us, and the driver, maybe in his fifties, inquired where I was heading: "'*A mukhayyam Burj ash-Shamali*'", to Burj Shemali camp. Before I was able to continue to give the name of the shop where I had agreed to meet my friend, the driver muttered "*Allah ma'ik*'", God be with you, and continued on his way.

In Lebanon, similar encounters were so numerous – my asking for a ride to Burj Shemali or Rashidieh camps and the drivers declining by tilting their head backward and moving on to the next potential customer – that they did not simply indicate bad luck or a reluctance to take the journey due to heavy traffic, but told of the general attitude toward the camps: they were places that Lebanese drivers did not want to enter. Once I was even dropped off on the way, when the driver realized that the hospital I was heading to was not the Italian one on the south-east edge of the city but the one inside Rashidieh camp. To his credit, he did not just leave me there but drove close to the entrance of the camp, got another service driver to give me a seat and took only half of the usual fare. After these experiences, I soon learned to spot the Palestinian drivers, from the *kufiyah* wrapped around their headrest or spread on the dashboard, the maps of Palestine hanging from the rearview mirror, or the stickers with Yasser Arafat's face on them on the windows, or simply from the place in which they were waiting. With them, the journey to the camps did not end before it had even begun.

Integral to a consideration of how refugee camps define the lives and possibilities of their dwellers, is not only the community inside them but maybe even more so the community of the host society and its relation to those dwelling in the camps. How the outsiders viewed the camps and their residents profoundly affected the everyday and the possibilities that were available. As is usually the case with refugee camps, the connotations others had of them were most often negative. These attitudes extended from the camps as material environments to the people living in them. As exemplified by the reactions of Lebanese service drivers, camps were generally deemed to be dangerous places to enter. This attitude was most common in Lebanon, where the relation between the host community and the Palestinian refugees was strained by the history of the civil war, but in the West Bank and Jordan the camps were also often considered unruly neighborhoods, where problems with drugs and violence were thought to be more common than elsewhere, whether this was true or not. Even in the context of friendly relations with a camp refugee, this general attitude could prevail.

"Street people" and troublemakers

As the theorization of camp suggests, the camps themselves form exceptional space that is cast outside the sovereignty of the host nation and, as my experiences with Lebanese taxi drivers exemplify, they are at times avoided by citizens even when they

share the same urban spaces[49]. In Jordan, however, while the camps are to some extent a case of their own, they are still treated similarly to other low-income neighborhoods that also strongly mark those living in them. In the capital these neighborhoods are collectively referred to as East Amman, and living in them means being regarded as less educated, less capable and, in some cases, more conservative and more likely to be involved in criminality, than those living in the well-off neighborhoods of West Amman. In Jordan, people of Palestinian origin form the majority of the country's citizens, and living in a camp there defined position and possibilities more than being a Palestinian in itself. When it comes to the camps, their residents are often seen as "street people", working on the streets as market vendors, street cleaners, or in other low-income employment that does not require a high level of education.

Furthermore, for Amal, living in Gaza camp was a source of shame that negatively determined how people approached her. She even confessed that she had kept her place of dwelling a secret out of fear of people's reactions:

> A: When I was in college, no one knows I'm from Gaza camp. Because if they know, they won't talk to me. Even the Palestinians.
>
> T: Even the other Palestinians?
>
> A: Yes.
>
> T: Why is that? Why are they so…
>
> A: Because they have this idea about Gaza camp that this camp is, not good. I don't know why but
>
> T: Like the people are not good? Those living here.
>
> A: Yeah.

Clearly distressed by others' views on camp dwellers, for Amal living in the camp was a source of conflicting feelings, and she was unwilling to disclose her place of residence even when encouraged to do so. She had a strong feeling that if others knew she was from Gaza camp they would cut her off:

> I have a friend from America, I know her for like ten years now. She went with me to the college and she said, maybe you should say you are from Gaza camp, because you can change the idea. And I said that I can't. Because if I say so, they won't talk to me.

Amal also thought that Gaza camp was the camp that was most affected by these sorts of negative attitude, even when she could not really vocalize why, other than to say that outsiders saw the camp as "no good".

Karim recognized the same attitude. Similar to Amal, Karim had not grown up in Gaza camp but had moved there from a city, and he could thus relate to both the outsider and the insider views on the camp. When his father had informed the family that they would be moving to the camp, Karim was not happy. He was accustomed to life in a city, and exchanging that for life in a remote refugee camp about which he had his own prejudices was not appealing. Having changed his opinions since, Karim was rather reflective about his previous attitudes toward the camp and the people dwelling in it:

> When I get to the camp, usually like, everybody's perspective about the camps, and I grew up the city, even my perspective was city people's perspective on the camps: troublemaker people, thieves, how can I say, violent people, barbarians, uneducated people, they are always, like, sitting in the alleys, doing drugs, the community is infected by the drugs as well. So that was one of the things I had seized, or that I had that perspective about the camp. And when I got involved with the camp, I started learning about the camp, that there are people, like, it's kind of, not all the fingers are the same because the fingers vary, like the length vary. So, which means, in other words it means people do vary from person to another. So, it could be a bad person in this camp which had made a big mess about being from this camp. So, everybody ended up thinking this camp is wrong because of that person.

After initially refusing to interact with the people around him, Karim was drawn out from his bubble by an English course that was organized in the camp. The native speaker running the course was impressed with Karim's level of English, and this led to his acquiring the role of teaching assistant and interpreter. In his new position, Karim encountered the camp dwellers from a new perspective, as individuals rather than as a single unit, and was thus forced to revisit his assumptions about them.

In the Jordanian context, it became especially evident that the stereotypes and negative attitudes were associated with the camp itself (see also Marshood 2010: 101). The same has been observed by Nell Gabiam in Syria, where "it is the Palestinian refugee camp as a space rather than the Palestinian identity that is stigmatized" (Gabiam 2016: 115). Though in Jordan there has been an increase in discrimination against Palestinians in certain sectors of society ever since national identity became based on tribal origin rather than on the unity of the two Banks (see Nanes 2008), Jordanian citizens of Palestinian origin living in urban Amman did not

experience their position in the same way as Palestinians living in camps, and the difference was not solely as a result of the economic distance between the urban dwellers and those in the camps. The majority of the Palestinians I met while doing fieldwork were living outside the camps and, for them, being a Palestinian was more of a political identification than something that significantly limited their horizons.

On one occasion, a Palestinian acquaintance I was chatting with said that he had not even experienced the difference between the East Bank Jordanians (those with a tribal background) and the West Bank Jordanians (those with a Palestinian background) before he entered university. There, he noticed that some tribal Jordanians had racist attitudes toward Palestinians and that a clear division was drawn between the two peoples. The significance of a person's origin was further emphasized for him by the fact that his university days were during the Second Intifada, and the prohibition of politics on the campus meant that Palestinians wanting to show their support for the events taking place in Palestine had to be extremely careful not to end up in trouble. Aside from this, being an urban Palestinian meant that one was more likely to face difficulties when dealing with state officials, and less likely to be elected to governmental or security positions.

Living in a camp could reduce someone's life chances, for example the possibilities to find a good employment, as was explained to me in Marka camp. While I was sitting in the *mukhtar*'s home, a group of men who had gathered there recounted the reasons for the high unemployment rates among the camp dwellers. From their perspective, factories and other employers preferred not to hire young men from the camps because of the problems they might end up causing. They wanted to avoid the bad reputation those who might have confrontations with the police could bring to their companies. Why the young men from the camp ended up in trouble was, in turn, explained by their unemployment, which resulted in a lack of income and thus limited possibilities to engage in commercial activities: when the young men socialized on the streets and saw people with nice new cars, expensive new phones, or other commodities they were unable to acquire, they got frustrated and ended up starting fights.

At times, s*hebaab* (young men) from the camps were identified as the source of problems within the camp community also. Young men loitering on the streets or spending their time in coffee shops were often brought up when social issues that were faced in the camps, such as drugs and fighting, were discussed. In Burj Shemali camp, the camp's security officer explained that the fact that young men had time to kill due to unemployment and the fact that they were filling it by spending time in the coffee shops, of which there were as many as 29 in the camp, was a major reason

for drug use and family problems. While explaining this, a young man who had spent the night in a cell precisely because of drug use was released, and the officer invited him in to the lounge where we were chatting and having coffee as if to prove his point. And the security officer was not alone in his view that the idleness of young men was a source of problems. Young men with too much time on their hands were associated with possible trouble, as they were thought to get frustrated with their limited possibilities to create either the life they wanted or the one expected of them.

Scorn, exclusion and mistrust

Communal divisions in Lebanon run deep, from the sectarian-based neighborhoods to separate civil laws. The civil war widened the rifts and they have been hard to mend, and though everyday encounters do cross sectarian divisions, these divisions are nevertheless significant in multiple aspects of life. Palestinians occupy their own slot in this societal system, and the Palestinian social position in Lebanon is not an easy one. As has been discussed, Palestinians are excluded from a range of rights and are also easily blamed for the misfortunes the country has faced. The concrete separation of Palestinians was evident not only in camps and Palestinian gatherings but also in seemingly more diverse settings, such as universities. On a university campus in Tyre, benches were lined up around the outside of a covered spot at the far end of the courtyard where the Palestinians sat. They spent their breaks there with other Palestinian students rather than among the Lebanese. One student, who had attended a private Lebanese school rather than an UNRWA school before entering university, explained that even though he still had some Lebanese friends from his school days, he preferred to spend time with other Palestinians, as problems emerged every now and then between him and his Lebanese friends, simply because he was a Palestinian. It seemed that there was a mutual reservation, and even mistrust, between Palestinians and their hosts, and that significant social relations were formed with other Palestinians rather than across the national divide.

Figure 5 Palestinian students hanging out on a university campus

The conditions and treatment that Palestinians face in Lebanon were freshly observed by the Syrian Palestinians who had arrived in the camps after fleeing the violence of the Syrian civil war. The life they had lived in Syria before the problems started formed a reference point that highlighted the difficult position they were forced into when they fled to Lebanon. "[In Syria] life is good, it is simple. There is no separation between Syrians and Palestinians" was how Samiha, a Palestinian refugee in her late sixties, saw the difference. She had been a small child, only two years old, when Nakba of 1948 took place and her family had fled to Syria. She had lived her life in Yarmouk camp in Damascus but was forced to escape with her husband when shelling made staying too dangerous. For Samiha, the escape from Syria constituted another Nakba and, for her personally, a more devastating one, as she was forced to abandon the life she had managed to build there.

When I met Samiha's family, they were in Lebanon without official permits, as they had traveled to Syria and returned at a time when Palestinians from Syria were issued only one-day transit visas. Instead of continuing on to the airport, they had returned to Tyre, where they now shared an apartment with another Syrian Palestinian family, whose daughter their son had married before trying his luck at entering Europe. Samiha explained that in Syria Palestinians received equal treatment to that of citizens in most walks of life, and the exclusion they encountered in Lebanon formed a stark contrast. The experiences of Syrian Palestinians tell not only

of the level of official exclusion that Palestinians are subjected to in Lebanon, but also of the relevance of its societal manifestations. In Syria, Palestinians are also officially stateless yet, as I was repeatedly told, there was no difference between Syrians and Syrian Palestinians, no distinction was made in everyday encounters. The experiences of my Lebanese friend testified to this: when living in Damascus she had often visited Yarmouk to do her shopping, but in Lebanon she had not entered the camps. Though I am not in a position to analyze whether there were prejudices against Palestinians, in general, or camp refugees, in particular, from the perspective of those who had fled to Lebanon, Syria constituted a place where getting by in life was simpler, and where Palestinians did not feel outsiders as much as they did in Lebanon. The experience of displacement and loss played into these notions, yet it is also widely recognized that Lebanon is the hardest place to be Palestinian, due not simply to the lack of official rights but also to the way in which Palestinians are generally encountered by the Lebanese.

In theory, all Palestinians face the same limitations in Lebanon, both inside and outside the camps, but living in a camp does add a layer to the level of exclusion. If someone lives in a camp, or in a Palestinian gathering, they are easily recognized as a Palestinian even if they have Lebanese citizenship. In Burj Shemali camp, a sizable portion of the residents are Palestinians who have acquired Lebanese citizenship at some point, either due to the location of their village of origin or as part of the unknown number of Palestinians who have been naturalized over the decades. Asma is one of those whose family has had both Palestinian and Lebanese nationality for several generations because of the location of their village of origin in a disputed border region. Though holding Lebanese citizenship does make life easier on an official level, for example because a Lebanese passport provides relatively better chances of traveling, Asma stressed that they were still treated as Palestinians and thus discriminated against. Their accent is one way to identify those of Palestinian origin[50], and even those living in camps. A friend from Rashidieh camp joked about her sister who "speaks like a person from a camp", whereas she herself sought verification that her own accent was more sophisticated and thus not necessarily recognized as how a refugee from a camp would speak. This differentiation can affect the way in which one is treated, as Asma noted that while the Lebanese do not "love you even if you are living out of the camp", this is still seen as better than living in one, as camps are easily associated with the presence of violence, drugs, and other sorts of problem.

Dubious space

One evening I was sitting with Munir in a camp center and we started to discuss whether the refugees were still somehow seen as outsiders in the West Bank. The topic had come up with others, and I wanted to hear his view as someone working with the refugee communities. He recognized the same negative connotations I had encountered in my other fields and reflected on them at length:

> M: Yes, and this [attitude] was very much at the beginning of the establishment of the camps, even in 50s, 60s people from the camp were represented in the eyes of those who are not refugees as savages, as people who do not deserve respect. Even Palestinian people looked at refugees this way, as really savage people. When they talk about refugees, it's the same way as they talk about a real bad community. And, like, they start making these stories about camps, about people in the camp. But this has a bit decreased by the time but until today, *ya'ni* [like, lit. I mean], you can sometimes touch this understanding in the sense how they talk about camps. They know that they are refugee camps, but I believe that the vast majority of the communities surrounding the refugee camps has never been inside the camps. And this, *ya'ni*, this itself would indicate that those people lack an understanding of the reasons why the refugees are here. So, I still think that people who are not refugees, not all of them but, like, there are few who look at refugee communities in a disrespectful way, in a way that those people are a burden to us. And also, the PA and Israeli policies played an important role in enhancing this with the non-refugees. So, for example, refugee camps do not pay for electricity and water. Sometimes, like, the PA organizations, in several ways, in indirect ways convince those from West Bank that they pay the water of Palestinian refugees, which is untrue. So Palestinians from Bethlehem, from Ramallah get angry at refugees because, like, why do we have to pay for you. […] And, also, like, the Israeli invasions, is like, if we talk about the beginning of the First, the Second Intifada 2002, the main invasions were for camps. Like in 2002 they invaded Dheisheh, Aida, Jenin, Balata, all of refugee camps. Even they were in cities but, like, there were no direct attacks, in general, to the cities, like the attacks were directed to refugee camps. So, this would, or has constituted something in the consciousness of Palestinians, who are not refugees, that we are suffering these circumstances because of refugees, because of refugee camps. Yes, so this is how non-refugees look at refugee communities. It's same with other host countries, but we are in the same community. But this has decreased since, or after Oslo.
>
> T: Okay, so now they are, like, more…

M: A bit of acceptance. I have a lot of friends who are not refugees, who are not Muslims, who are not, *ya'ni*, there is kind of, knowing the other. But this is still, this fear, this phobia inside, inside them, of refugees. I have a lot of non-refugee friends who've never been in a refugee camp. I met them in university.

T: So, they don't come in [the camp] to visit your place?

M: No.

T: If you asked them, would they come?

M: They would always get an excuse for not coming. I don't know if it is a real excuse or an excuse for not coming. But I believe, because I read a lot about refugees and the phobia and fear for refugee communities, that there is still this fear among non-refugees for the refugee communities. Like, they would be saying that if you get in a refugee community, you would be beaten. I know a lot of international and foreigner who live in the camp and never been harassed by anyone, or even attacked or. Like, of course some cases happen but, like, there is an acceptance of others. If you get beaten, then it is because you have done something that disrespects the camp itself.

Scholars have discussed how in Palestinian Arab society the loss of land results in a loss of honor (the proverb, *ardi 'irdi,* "my land is my honor" exemplifies this), and thus the refugees were treated with mistrust and were scorned for abandoning their land, being seen as indirectly responsible for their own displacement (see Bshara 2012; Sayigh 1979: 125; Feldman 2018: 154–155; also Bisharat 1997; Peteet 1995). Yet, like Munir, many stressed that the refugees were no longer seen as outsiders or as foreign to the Palestinian communities in the West Bank (see also Gren 2015: 45–46).

It nevertheless became evident in encounters with non-refugee Palestinians that, much like in Jordan and Syria, the camps have retained their exceptional nature and are still often viewed with suspicion. I was asked why I was living in Dheisheh camp when I could stay in Beit Jala or Beit Sahour instead, known to be the areas favored by internationals living in the Bethlehem area (cf. Gabiam 2016: 113–114). One night, when driving me home to the camp, a non-refugee friend even offered to find me "a nicer place to stay" the next time I visited Palestine. Consequently, though camps in the West Bank are closely integrated into their surroundings in many ways, they are still places that are avoided by those who do not live in them or have family connections to them.

Though mostly expressed by non-refugees, at times the negative characteristics associated with the camps arose from the refugees themselves. Parents did not want their sons to spend time with other youths from the same neighborhood out of a fear of their getting them involved in drugs. When a friend went to visit Ein El Hilweh camp in Lebanon, known to house many clandestine factions, his wife wanted him to call her once he had left, to let her know there had been no problems. Furthermore, bringing up children in the camp was a theme in relation to which the negative quality of camp life was most often mentioned. As has been discussed in relation to the camp materiality, crowdedness and lack of control over one's lived environment was a cause of annoyance and conflict in the camps. The ability to determine where one's children spent time and with whom was also considered to be compromised inside the camp, the street being a euphemism for the negative behavior that was associated with the 'children of the camp'. Hassan, the father of five I spoke to about his decision to move outside of the camp, further elaborated his reasons for doing so by reflecting on the conditions parents face when their children are growing up in the camp environment:

> You know, it's the camp, you have no control over your children. Your children are controlled and raised by the street. Because, you open the door and you find fifteen child playing. There is no other place to go.

It was not true, strictly speaking, that in a camp like Dheisheh, where Hassan lived before moving outside its borders, there was no place to go except the streets, as the camp was full of organizations that had activities for children and youths of different ages. It was, nevertheless, common to see children playing in the streets, boys kicking a football in the narrow alleys and small girls standing there with their older siblings. Furthermore, Hassan's description was accurate for other camps and, even if it were not, it tells of the understandings associated with the camps, which very much reflect those held by non-camp dwellers: unruly people who are prone to causing trouble, with the street again being the locus of unwanted behavior. This notion seemed to be so strongly held that, when Nada talked about her childhood in Kalandia camp, she considered herself not to have actually lived "the camp life" because of the way in which her parents had organized her and her brothers' upbringing:

> For me and my brothers, we felt the difference. Like, we never lived the life [of the camp]. To always stay on the streets and, like, play all day in the street and come home late. And maybe barefoot the whole, the half of the time, and, em, like not doing our homework. We had an organized system in the house

from the day that we, you know, when we started growing up. And, I mean, until now, *l-hamdillah*, we try to maintain the same balance.

Though this negative understanding emerged regularly, not everyone held the belief that childhood in a camp was something from which to spare one's children. Growing up in a camp was also considered from a more positive perspective, as something that builds character and creates strength that helps in getting by in life. Lina, who had lived most of her life in Kalandia next to Ramallah, and still worked there, stressed that growing up in the camp gave children a strong personality, and made them more mature than those outside the camps because of the life they faced. Though Lina had moved away from Kalandia after getting married, she still took her daughter there so that she would grow up to have the same sort of personality as the children living in the camp. In fact, and quite contrary to in my other fields, in the West Bank the camp could be used in constructing a positive self-image, even amid the more negative aspects usually emphasized by outsiders.

5.5   "Camp is the right of return": the political importance of Palestinian refugee camps

"In the camp, I felt closer to Palestine", Dina sighed when she was showing me her collection of Palestine-themed pins, patches and shoulder scarfs in her room. Her family had just recently moved away from a camp, and though their new house was of a higher standard, with more space for each person and in a less crowded environment, fifteen-year-old Dina felt that she had lost something, and she missed the camp. She still visited their old house regularly, as her aunt continued to live there, but she nevertheless felt that her link to Palestine was somehow weakened when everyday life was not lived in the Palestinian space of the camp, closely surrounded by other Palestinian refugees.

I was rather surprised when exactly the same situation was repeated in another of my fields: the family of a teenaged girl had moved out from a camp, and the girl explained to me how she missed being there, being closely surrounded by other refugees. Rather than seeing these two encounters as a coincidence, their similarity reflects a shared understanding of the camps. As has been delineated, the popular discourse is that Palestinian refugee camps are not merely places of dwelling, where one routinely engages in everyday activities, but also an integral part of the refugee identity and, as such, places infused with highly political connotations. The

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Palestinian camp is the place that ties different temporalities together: it is the link to the past, the place of resistance and identity, and the site that embodies the hope for the future return. Though this symbolic dimension of camps should not be overstated, it is nevertheless a discourse every refugee is aware of, and which affects the ways in which life in the camps is narrated, especially to outsiders.

To remember and to return

One way to frame the Palestinian camps is to look at them as places where non-belonging is produced for political purposes. This is manifested through the materiality, as has been discussed, but also with the understanding that living in a camp is a way to hold on to the cities and villages of which the refugees were dispossessed: to have an address in a refugee camp is to maintain the address of the home lost in 1948 (Weizman 2007: 228). For this reason, camp dwellers in the West Bank do not pay municipal taxes, the idea being that they will do so once they are able to return to their ancestral cities and villages. Camps remind us of the refugees' belonging to Palestine by declaring their non-belonging: as long as there are refugee camps, the international community is forced to remember Nakba and the injustice imposed on Palestinians by the settler-colonial state of Israel. Hence, in Lebanon I heard the camp being described as the right of return (*mukhayyam haq l-'awda*), in Jordan that the camp was part of Palestine, and in the West Bank it was stressed that the camps compelled not only the rest of the world but also those living in them to remember, as the reality faced in the camps, and especially the treatment of the camps by the occupying forces, encouraged the refugees to hang on to the right of return.

This importance of camps in the claims for the return has also been recognized by Israel. The refugee camps function as material reminders of the dispossession that took place in 1948 and, as long as they dot the landscapes of the Middle East, Nakba continues to affect the refugees' lives. In June 1973, the then defense minister of Israel, Moshe Dayan, is quoted as saying that

> [a]s long as the refugees remain in their camps […] their children will say they come from Jaffa or Haifa; if they move out of the camps, the hope is they will feel an attachment to their new land. (Quoted by Masriyeh Hazboun 1999: 12)

Though proved not to be true, as Palestinian refugees have renegotiated their refugeeness and the right of return beyond the camp borders (see Hammer 2005),

the connotation between camps and remembrance still prevails. It has even affected Israeli policies in the areas that were occupied in 1967. Since the beginning of the occupation of the West Bank and the Gaza Strip, the IDF has periodically introduced plans to upgrade the infrastructure and living standards of the camps or to resettle refugees outside of them altogether (Weizman 2007: 229). The material form of the camps has been introduced as a problem, not for humanitarian reasons but because the poor socio-physical environment was considered a possible source of discontent that could erupt against the occupier. Israel has seen the camps as a breeding ground for resistance, which is why they have been hit hard in military operations. The aim of the resettlement has been to eliminate "the refugee problem", an initiative that is not welcomed by the refugees. In Gaza, where refugees form a clear majority of the population, the resettlement plans have been forcibly implemented by destroying houses in refugee camps and denying people the chance to rebuild them (Dahlan 1990, Hazboun 1994). Palestinian sociologist Norma Masriyeh Hazboun has reminded us that "[t]he long-term objectives of these operations were the liquidation of the refugee camps and the refugees as a category, which forms the core of the Palestinian question" (Masriyeh Hazboun 1999: 13).

Though telling of a different reality, in Lebanon the trend of emigration was similarly introduced as a threat to the Palestinian political cause. Older men in particular repeated that soon the camps would be empty, that only the old would stay because everyone else would leave Lebanon, if they had the chance. Emptying camps were portrayed as a problem precisely because they were seen as weakening the resistance. In Burj Shemali, Abu Samir feared that the camps might end up being destroyed, which would affect the standing of the Palestinian resistance. He talked about his sons, one of whom had stayed in the camp while the other two had emigrated to the Gulf and Denmark. Abu Samir thought that the son who had stayed in Lebanon and continued to live in a camp was more committed to the resistance than his brothers who had sought a life elsewhere. The one who had stayed was a political leader of a Palestinian party in Lebanon, and he was often approached by those hoping for his support in applying for a visa to Turkey. Abu Samir, however, proudly stated that his son always refused if the aim was to emigrate to Europe, and only gave his support if the plan was to visit for a holiday and then return to Lebanon. Repeating the same discourse, a member of the Popular Committee in a nearby camp equated the camp with the right of return, and explained that he always tried to convince the *shebaab* (young men) to stay in Lebanon. He, however, also recognized that he was unable to succeed in his attempt because he had nothing to offer them. He was well aware of the limited possibilities Palestinians had in

Lebanon, the difficulties of camp life, and the frustration of the youth as they struggled to establish their adult lives. He thus understood the standpoint of the young people, that they had needs and hopes they could not fulfill in the camp, yet, from a political standpoint, he nevertheless maintained the connection between the camp and the implementation of the right of return.

The tying of the refugee existence and the will to return so closely with the camps was also challenged by my interlocutors, and even the Popular Committee leader in Lebanon was keen to note that Palestinians living in Europe participated in demonstrations and supported the Palestinian cause. While at first glance differences in how the camp was viewed might seem generational, in that younger refugees were less invested in the strict definition of the camp and in refugee politics, I found that the picture was rather more complicated, affected not only by the age cohort, and thus life experiences and expectations, but also by political affiliation and position in camp hierarchies. In the West Bank, Nassim was one of those who were openly critical of equating the refugee identity with residing in a camp. As someone living in Doha, he did not approve of the strict way of defining who was 'a real refugee' but rather was among those who tried to transcend this understanding:

> One person from the camp, I think he was […], I don't know his name really, but he asked the question, or raised the question, "do I have to live in the camp to be considered a refugee?" And it was complicated to answer. Because nowadays we call the Doha city the new camp, because most of the people, we can say 90 percent of the people living in Doha city, they are from Aida camp, al-Azza camp, Dheisheh camp, maybe Arroub, maybe, you know. A lot of them from the camps.

Though Nassim was critical of the exclusive way in which refugees were defined through the camp, camps nevertheless emerged in how he explained the refugeeness of Doha: its residents originated from the camps, hence Doha was a refugee municipality. The camps form such an integral part of Palestinians' national narrative that even when my interlocutors' own position was contradictory, or at least revised the popular understanding or criticized the conditions in the camps and expressed a desire to live elsewhere, the camps' importance in defining the refugee identity and the struggle, in general, and the right of return, in particular, was acknowledged.

Places of resistance

Palestinian camps are political not only in the sense that they connect to Palestine through an insistence on material temporariness that declares non-belonging, but also more concretely. Palestinian camps have produced new forms of political organization: they are self-governed spaces as much as they are humanitarian spaces or spaces controlled by the host-sovereign through exclusion (as suggested by e.g. Agamben 1998; Agier 2011; Hyundman 2000). In the Palestinian context, the relation between camp and *polis*, city, is, in fact, turned upside down, the political being heightened in the camps rather than in the cities (cf. Agamben 1998; Ek 2006; see Rygiel 2012). It was often pointedly remarked by the refugees that they were the ones carrying the political struggle while those in the cities just wanted to live in peace. Camps in Lebanon and the West Bank have their own Popular Committees, which are political bodies composed of the refugees themselves. The political dimension of the camps is further highlighted when it is remembered that the camps are the birthplace of the Palestinian resistance movement, and they are still considered to be spaces that are pivotal to the struggle against the occupation. The camps carry the histories that are tied to the Palestine Liberation Organization and the heyday of the armed struggle, the intifadas and the different forms of resistance.

Nowadays, Palestinians under different sovereignties have unequal opportunities to engage in political resistance. In Lebanon people often noted that it was not possible to do anything from where they were living: "Palestine can only be liberated from within" was the general feeling. This attitude differs drastically from the "days of revolution", when it was the exile and, specifically, the refugee camps that led the fight against the Israeli occupier. The current reality faced in Lebanon is shaped by the unstable and often violent history, socioeconomic hardships, and the disappointment with Palestinian politics since Oslo, all of which have distanced the Palestinian communities from the national struggle and have created a sense of hopelessness when it comes to possibilities to change the current political situation. Yet when actual engagement was not deemed possible, the narrative on the camps as a link to Palestine persisted, and I met both young and old who stressed that Palestinians should not abandon the camps, that even when the trend to emigrate was accelerating, they themselves would not leave Lebanon except for Palestine.

Refugee camps can easily seem places purely of vulnerability, exclusion, and deprivation, but they are also a manifestation of endurance and living. Their

existence tells of those who persisted and carried on. Camps are spaces of everyday life, of all it entails, with its joys and sorrows. They are spaces of belonging, agency, and identity. In this chapter, I have contemplated these different dimensions of camp life. Framed as the present of the camps, the focus has been on materialities, socialities, politics, and meanings. These dimensions of everyday life have been molded by the specific histories of Palestinian refugees, and they are part of how camp life in the different locations of exile comes to be experienced. As has become evident, living in camps means facing diverse problems and, while there are also positive sides, many of my interlocutors felt that they had only limited chances to enhance their living conditions if they continued as camp dwellers.

A concentration on suffering can produce a generalized, apolitical, and ahistorical image of a refugee, as someone who is merely an object of humanitarian interventions by being their "object of knowledge, assistance, and management" (Malkki 1996: 377). However, for my Palestinian interlocutors, describing the hardships they faced was also a way to manifest their political case, as it told of their existences as refugees. To be a Palestinian refugee dwelling in a refugee camp means to be dispossessed, excluded, discriminated against, and stereotyped. The camps epitomize the abandonment and multiple displacements that have characterized Palestinians' lives for the past 70 years. Though understandably not the preferred place of residence for most of their dwellers, they are nevertheless places of significance, both socially and politically. For my interlocutors, they are first and foremost the spaces that mold their experiences, possibilities, and aspirations. They create a specific type of spatial identity that is part of my interlocutors' self-understanding; they form the everyday, and thus the conditions in which the future possibilities are reflected.

The aim of this chapter has been to take a look at the conditions of the everyday, to introduce the frame in which lives unfold in the three sites of Palestinian exile. The multi-sited approach has allowed me to acknowledge the differing realities, but also the continuities between the fields. The material form of the camps creates many shared annoyances, and the political discourse produces shared meanings. The positions of the camps and their residents, however, have their own specificities in each field, the biggest difference being the level of exclusion from the surrounding society. While in Jordan the camp also affects the ways in which its residents are encountered, they are nevertheless part of the host sovereign to a totally different extent to in Lebanon. In the West Bank, on the other hand, the occupation is an all-encompassing dimension of life, and while the camp refugees face it differently than those living in towns and cities, there is no way of escaping its effects on everyday

life. Delineating these realities of camp life serves the overall aims of this research, as exploring the conditions in which my interlocutors live in the present allows us to understand how the camp conditions come to encourage certain aspirations, how the material and social reality faced in the camps frames life there, and thus forms the basis for contemplating the hopes for the future. The question that remains is: how livable are the camp spaces of the present under a given sovereign? Are they able to provide the possibilities for a good life, and do they enable Palestinian refugees to continue living in them? To explore these questions, I now turn to the resources Palestinian refugees have to build their lives in the camps.

6   On the threshold of present and future: means for managing in the everyday

When encountering the future, there can be certain things at our disposal that make everyday life more manageable by decreasing the anxiousness its uncertainties easily produce. Access to free education, reasonably priced healthcare, and financial assistance in the case of unemployment or other misfortunes can provide a sense of security and make coping with everyday life less exhausting and precarious. Consequently, in situations of "chronic crisis" (Vigh 2008) and without sufficient support systems, the precarities of the future can become a much bigger burden, whether they materialize or not. The presence of the future in the everyday might either expand or diminish: with no support system, it is up to the individual – within the community – to prepare for the future, to work hard in order to change the situation. Or, on the other hand, it might feel utterly pointless to make elaborate preparations, because the likelihood of occurrences that would nullify them remains high.

My interlocutors are directing toward the future when they anticipate the possible changes in their situation and consider the possibilities of managing from one day to the next. As has been demonstrated, the life framed by the camp and exile is full of difficulties that my Palestinian interlocutors have to navigate on a daily basis. Many of these difficulties have become what anthropologist Elisabeth Povinelli describes as "the wobbly order of the everyday" (Povinelli 2011: 144), quasi-events so common that they do not attract our attention but become "what life sounds like, more like a hum than an explosion, the sound of ambient background" (Povinelli 2011: 137). Issues related to compromised housing, limited employment opportunities, normalized violence, social and political problems, and precarious access to some of the most basic rights frame this life and intensify its inherent vulnerability. As Judith Butler has claimed, vulnerability is an ontological quality of our existence as social beings that exist in relation to one another and are dependent on the care of others – both humans and institutions – yet this vulnerability is clearly unequally distributed (Butler 2015: 20–22, 209–211), and the Palestinian refugees at the locus of this research are carrying more than their fair share.

In this chapter, I concentrate on the resources Palestinian refugees have in their lives to facilitate the temporal flow of the everyday. What are these sources of support and what kind of possibilities do they provide for Palestinian refugees? The resources direct toward the future as they are used by my interlocutors in meeting their needs. In other words, they enable life to continue and, in the best-case scenario, even transform it for the better. My interlocutors are active in engaging with different forms of assistance, as they work to widen both the scope and mode of the support they can utilize when needed. Access to the different providers of support is to some extent intertwined, and these providers are by no means as reliable and comprehensive as my interlocutors would prefer. It is thus also inadequacies of assistance that define how my Palestinian interlocutors are able to negotiate their access to sources of support and to navigate amid the diminishing opportunities, when they project from the present of the everyday to the always unpredictable future.

6.1   UNRWA and the right to support

One Wednesday morning before seven, my field assistant and I made our way from a gathering where I lived to El Buss camp. The camp is the smallest in Tyre, framed by two busy roads, one running along the sea toward the old city and the other leading to the east and south. On one side, the camp is bordered by Roman ruins, demarcated from the camp by a concrete wall. Movement into and out from the camp is controlled by two checkpoints, where outsiders like me are required to present permits acquired from Lebanese security officials. On that Wednesday morning, however, we did not use any of the official points of access but made our way to the camp using the narrow alleys, partly blocked by barrels filled with concrete and large cement blocks that prevented cars from using these unofficial routes. The reason for our exceptionally early excursion was an invitation I had received a couple of days earlier from Ahmad, a member of the El Buss Popular Committee, to join them in a protest against UNRWA and its recurring budget cuts that had resulted in insufficient services. The agency had struggled with budget deficits for years, if not decades, and the situation had only worsened since the crisis in Syria increased the needs of the Palestinian population both in Syria and in the surrounding countries that housed Syrian Palestinians who had fled the civil war. With their protest at the UNRWA office in El Buss camp, Ahmad and his fellow Popular Committee

members had decided to voice their discontent and be among the numerous others demonstrating their dissatisfaction with the agency's policies.

As an established refugee community, Palestinians have been able to create networks of support, both within the refugee community and with non-Palestinian actors. The most established, but simultaneously rather precarious, source of support was nevertheless formed *for them* by the international community, and that is UNRWA. Ilana Feldman, among others, has drawn attention to how UNRWA has influenced the political life of Palestinians, and how its humanitarianism has created both opportunities and constraints that continue to frame the relations and lives of the Palestinian refugees (Feldman 2009, 2012c; see also Gabiam 2016). The role of UNRWA in structuring the everyday lives in and the spatialities of the refugee camps cannot be bypassed as the presence, or absence, of the UN agency is an inseparable part of both the refugee landscapes and the everyday life of the camp dwellers.

As has been discussed, UNRWA was established to provide humanitarian assistance for the refugees, as well as work opportunities, but its contemporary mandate also incorporates development activities (see Gabiam 2016; Misselwitz & Hanafi 2010). It has a clear protective mandate, and over time the UN General Assembly has also strengthened its role in upholding the legal and human rights of Palestinian refugees (Bartholomeusz 2010). UNRWA's field of operation covers Lebanon, Jordan, Syria, the West Bank and the Gaza Strip, and if Palestinians are re-displaced within this geographical area, as has been the case with Syrian Palestinians fleeing to Jordan and Lebanon, they continue to access support through this agency rather than through UNHCR. UNRWA's mandate has to be extended by the General Assembly every three years and it is funded mostly by voluntary contributions from the member states, which is partly responsible for the chronic funding crisis the agency has suffered, a recent example being the USA's decision in early 2018 to cut its funding to the agency by half[51]. Though in this case European donors quickly lined up to disburse the lost millions[52], this nevertheless demonstrates the immanent vulnerability of UNRWA's operation.

Over the years, Palestinian refugees have come to see UNRWA's services as their right, as something they are entitled to and that is the international community's responsibility to provide for them, due to its complicity in their refugeeness. Ilana Feldman (2007) has observed that this view emerged very early on, that rather than seeing the humanitarian aid as charity, Palestinian refugees considered it in terms of rights (cf. states' responsibilities toward their citizens, humanitarian agencies as surrogate state). Palestinians' attitude toward UNRWA can thus be likened to the expectation that the state should provide the means for a good life, whether in the

form of employment or another sort of support (see Ayubi 1995: 239–240, 288, 208–209; Dahlgren 2014). Though emerging from the discourse of human rights that entails "a social right to the state provision of people's basic needs" (Dahlgren 2014: 142), what further encourages this sort of expectation is the connective and relational form of being and the reproduction of kin-type reciprocal obligations in the state-citizen relation (Joseph 2005, 2011). In the 'Arab state' the relation between a child and their father is reproduced in the relation between the state and its citizens: "he punishes but one can expect him to provide everything" (Ayubi 1995: 166). Similarly, in the Jordanian setting Abla Amawi has observed the "articulation of the rights and obligations of members of the family within the context of society as a whole" (Amawi 2000: 158).

But rather than explicitly framing the right to support in terms of kin-type obligations or an abstract idea of human rights, which were only just being formulated when the Palestinians became refugees, it was precisely the United Nations' direct responsibility that prompted this attitude among Palestinians. Feldman quotes from a letter from the employees of a Quaker organization that provided humanitarian aid in Gaza in the early years of displacement, in which it is noted:

> They [Palestinian refugees] feel strongly that the United Nations are responsible for their plight, and therefore have the total responsibility to feed, house, clothe, and repatriate them. (Feldman 2007: 144).

At present, as the most prominent service provider as well as an important employer, UNRWA is also a source of frustration for the refugees. Rather than considering UNRWA as a charity they are forced to rely on, my interlocutors discussed the UN agency's contributions precisely as a right to which they were entitled as Palestinian refugees. Thus, the cuts in funding that have materialized in a deteriorating quantity and quality of services are seen by the refugees as UNRWA failing to fulfill its obligations toward them.

On that early morning in El Buss camp I had expected a popular expression of discontent – which I knew existed among the refugee community – and hence the protest I witnessed was rather anticlimactic. The camp director arrived at work, and we sat in his small office and drank coffee while waiting for the Popular Committee members to arrive. After finishing some paperwork, the director gathered his belongings and left for home (my field assistant joked that he had got an extra day off), and then the Popular Committee members finally arrived (a handful of middle-aged men from different political parties), put a lock on the office door, took a photo,

chatted for a while on the quiet street and then one by one left in different directions. While not a mass demonstration, this small protest nevertheless highlights the ambivalent relation between UNRWA and Palestinian refugees, and it was by no means the only expression of discontent with the agency I heard, witnessed, or read news about during my fieldwork. Demonstrations were organized in both Tyre and Beirut and strikes took place while I was living in the West Bank, where the reorganization of aid distribution was leading to a decrease in personnel. In Lebanon, UNRWA was mentioned in almost all the discussions I had on the living conditions in the camps and, though it was not brought up in a similar manner in the West Bank, and even less so in Jordan, given that it provided much-needed services for those with compromised possibilities to access the private or governmental sector, its policies affected the possibilities that Palestinian refugees had to access the support they needed in their everyday lives.

Figure 6 Demonstration against cuts in UNRWA's services at Tyre

Despite the cuts made to services due to the chronic funding crisis, the number of those benefiting from different sectors of UNRWA's operation is significant. In

the 2018–2019 reporting year, almost 6.2 million displaced Palestinians were eligible for UNRWA's services and the agency had more than 31 000 employees in its area of operation, the majority of them Palestinian refugees. UNRWA maintains 708 schools and 144 primary healthcare facilities, and in January 2017 approximately 255 000 Palestinians benefited from its Social Safety Net program[53]. However, from the perspective of my interlocutors, all these numbers remained too low. When we were sitting in his living room in Dheisheh camp, Jaber, a teacher in an UNRWA school, complained how UNRWA was helping only a limited number of people even though many more needed the help. I had met Jaber through a friend to whom I had expressed my hope of talking with someone who worked for the agency and Jaber turned out to be fiercely critical of UNRWA's policies. He found many faults, not only in how services were distributed but also in the differentiating treatment of international and Palestinian staff, and in how he as an individual had been treated on the five occasions he had been arrested by the Israelis. As an employee, he had expected to receive help from the agency when he had been taken by the Israeli military, but instead UNRWA made him sign an agreement that he would not participate in political activities. Yet for Jaber, the most humiliating experience was when he had lost his refugee card in prison and UNRWA initiated an investigation into him in order to issue a new one: "They knew who I was, I was working for them" he exclaimed.

However, the more commonly shared experience regarding UNRWA is that of frustration about the decreasing services, and this was the most pressing issue for Jaber also: "I am now 51 years old, during my time, when I have been with UNRWA, the services have been cut by more than 70 percent". Jaber saw that there was a sense of anger with the agency among the refugees, due to the cuts it had made to the services: "they see that UNRWA has been established by the international decision to help the refugees and it should keep on providing these services until return, not to limit them." He recognized that the refugees had started to depend on themselves much more compared with in the first years of exile but he still stressed that UNRWA had responsibilities that it was not presently carrying out. Jaber was by no means the only one who voiced the sense of entitlement that Palestinian refugees felt toward provision by UNRWA. In Lebanon, the cuts made to healthcare support was one of the most frequent topics when UNRWA was discussed, and this was portrayed as a failing on the part of the agency, especially toward the older members of the refugee community who were often in need of intensive care. The tone in which the topic was discussed was empathetically disapproving, with UNRWA

depicted more as a state failing to care for its citizens than as an aid organization limiting the scope of its humanitarian assistance.

Cuts made specifically to healthcare can have far-reaching consequences, and Feldman (2017: 51) has observed that the inadequate care provided for those with life-threatening conditions not only results in unnecessary deaths but also degrades the expectations and hopes for the future. My own encounters in the field paint a rather similar picture. In Jordan, it was brought up in Gaza camp that the lack of adequate services deprived the elderly especially of a dignified life. Yet, due to familial obligations, the quality of healthcare concerned not only the elderly in need of the care, but also their children and even their grandchildren, who were the ones expected to look after them. The decreasing percentage of healthcare expenses covered by UNRWA created uncertainty, which especially in Lebanon diminished the prospects Palestinian refugees felt they had for continuing living in the country. For Samiha, having experienced the flight from Yarmouk to Lebanon and hence having lost the life she had been able to build in Syria, access to healthcare defined her conception of a good life. In Syria, she had been treated for rheumatism but in Lebanon she felt too scared to go to hospital. In their seventies, she and her husband used to receive UNRWA support with paying the rent of the apartment they shared with another Palestinian family from Syria and they feared that support with healthcare expenses would also be terminated.

In Burj Shemali camp I was told that UNRWA subsidized up to 50 percent of both pharmaceutical and medical expenses, but with little or no income many struggled to cover the remaining 50 percent. In such cases, there was still the possibility to turn to NGOs or the Popular Committees for further financial support, and in Popular Committee offices it was common to see people arriving to ask for this. However, NGOs' resources are scarce, increasingly so since more and more funding has been directed to the Syrian refugees arriving in Lebanon. In Samiha's case, though being a Palestinian from Syria, her identification as a Palestinian and the fact that she was living outside the camps meant that she was not entitled to the same amount of support as those Syrians falling under UNHCR's mandate, or those Palestinians living in the camps and thus being within the scope of organizations working with the camp refugees.

The violence in Syria and the consequent arrival of refugees has for its own part intensified the financial difficulties in UNRWA. The situation both of Palestinian refugees in Syria and those displaced to the surrounding countries has required emergency actions from the agency, part of which is the Syria Humanitarian Assistance Response Plan launched in September 2012. The arrival of Syrian

Palestinians, or Syrians in general, was indeed discussed as a reason for the lessening amount of support for the 'local' Palestinians in Lebanon. It was thought that responding to the needs created by the Syrian crisis had redistributed the already scarce resources, and not only UNRWA's resources but also those of NGOs whose attention had turned to the Syrian refugees, and this was seen as a reason for there not being as many projects involving Palestinians as there used to be. However, the Syrian Palestinians were also thought to be a pretext for a more politically driven project aiming to dissolve UNRWA by slowly whittling away its operation.

UNRWA had suffered from chronic under-budgeting long before the Syrian uprising turned into a bloody civil war. In reports by the Fafo Institute for Applied International Studies (Jacobsen 2003: 14, Babille et al. 2003) on the financial situation of UNRWA it has been noted that the agency has suffered from insufficient funding since the early 1990s, and in the 1999 report of the Working Group on the Financing of UNRWA submitted to the United Nation's General Assembly[54] the group's members voiced their concern about the difficult financial situation the agency faced. And this situation has only deteriorated since then. In 2015, the financial shortcomings had escalated to the point that the start of the school year was at risk, as the budget deficit for the following year had reached 101 million[55]. In 2017, the deficit had risen to 115 million[56] and, in April 2018, UNRWA Commissioner General Pierre Krahenbuhl declared that the agency might not open its schools that coming September, the budget shortfall having reached a new record high[57].

Though the budget deficit, and especially the insufficient funding available for core services, has affected the UNRWA operation as a whole, the relative urgency with which Palestinians rely on UNRWA in different fields has meant that the consequences have been differently felt. The socioeconomic and legislative position that Palestinians occupy in a given field affects the extent to which they depend on UNRWA in their everyday life. Gaza is probably the most extreme example of dependency on UNRWA but, among the fields engaged with in this dissertation, Lebanon was the place where UNRWA was most often named in discussions about the flow of everyday life. The lack of financial resources due to the limited employment opportunities led to an inability to access the expensive private sector services, which in addition to the absence of adequate service support from UNRWA meant that my interlocutors were forced to endure discomfort, or even physical pain. Like Samiha, people felt afraid of going to the doctor because of the expense it entailed, and thus avoided it even when there was an obvious physical need for medical intervention. Though this was by no means unique to Lebanon – in the West Bank, Sari, the director of an organization whom I had met in Aida

camp, also noted, "we go to a doctor when we really cannot do otherwise" – it was in Lebanon that the possibilities of everyday life were most directly linked to the situation in UNRWA. The most evident example of this is the access to employment markets. Due to the restrictions on working in Lebanon, cuts made to the UNRWA budget have a direct effect not only on the available services but also on the employment opportunities of especially those Palestinians with a higher level of education. In the West Bank, and especially in Jordan, the employment markets for Palestinians are far less restricted, reducing the reliance on UNRWA positions.

Hamid is one of those who has experienced the shrinking employment opportunities UNRWA is able to provide for Palestinians in Lebanon. Though he had worked as a teacher in an UNRWA school for sixteen years, when I met him he was employed only on a daily basis, with no permanent contract. This situation was a source of stress for him. He was scared to go to work because he feared that a decision would have been made that he would lose his job, and that he would be forced to return home without receiving his salary. As a Palestinian, he had no possibility to work as a teacher in the public sector, which limited his possibilities to find work if his contract with UNRWA was terminated. Hamid had moved to El Buss camp when he started working in the camp school, but now, with the precarious employment situation, he expressed a hope to leave Lebanon altogether, but only if he could find a safe way for his wife and children to join him. Yet, with his limited financial means, finding such a route out was unlikely, leaving him little option but to continue living in the camp one day at a time.

Due to budget cuts in UNRWA, many shared Hamid's fate. People recounted how positions were not filled after a teacher retired or their contract ended, and Rima, living in Rashidieh camp in Lebanon, was one of the many forced to sit at home waiting to see whether there was a need for a substitute teacher when someone was ill or took maternity leave. Having an English teaching qualification, she was willing to take any job available, but she simultaneously recognized that the benefits offered to its staff make UNRWA an appealing employer. However, even with these relatively good fringe benefits, the salaries that UNRWA's Palestinian employees received were negatively compared with those of the international staff. Jaber complained that as well as working in an UNRWA school he had to have two other jobs in order to cover all his living expenses and have enough for a somewhat good life, while the international employees, who had lower-level degrees, earned much more than him. Jaber's bitterness toward the agency was further amplified by the lack of support he received, whether with the aforementioned cases of his arrest by the Israelis or in caring for his sick aunt. To make ends meet, and to pay his children's

university fees, Jaber had to give lectures and teach courses in a Palestinian university in addition to his employment in the UNRWA school.

Especially in Lebanon, the number of Palestinians UNRWA is able to employ has far-reaching consequences, affecting not only the possibilities to earn a living but also the students' willingness to devote time to their studies. In his work as a teacher in an UNRWA school, Hamid had seen the dim prospects of finding employment, together with the poor economic situation of many families, reflected in the students' willingness to continue their studies: why study if it is not possible to enroll in university or find work after graduation? Rima had also noticed the declining academic performance among Palestinians in Lebanon, traditionally proud of their high education level: "When I was in UNRWA school [as a student] it was as a private school. We were not allowed to speak Arabic in English period. Now they talk Arabic, not all the teachers but some of them. They speak Arabic all the time, they don't manage the classroom". Though Rima saw that the situation was partly a result of social problems in the camps, she also named the large class sizes as a reason for teachers being unable to perform well. It is not uncommon to have thirty to forty pupils in one class, and the times I visited my host family's daughters' school confirmed the stories I had heard from others. It was also clear that the level of English was not good enough for the students to follow teaching given in English. When I was asked to attend an extra-curricular class for teenagers to improve their English, to talk with them to help with their pronunciation, their lack of very basic vocabulary made it difficult to carry out this request.

Nevertheless, education has been, and still is, highly valued among Palestinian refugees, and UNRWA's role as its provider has been of importance. UNRWA, together with the Palestinian Student Fund, has for its part made pursuing university studies possible by offering loans and grants (Hanafi & Tiltnes 2008). The discourse is that as refugees they had nothing else to rely on, they had no land to live off, all they had was the schools, which they needed to educate themselves in order to improve their situation. Furthermore, to prove their worth the refugees needed to have a higher level of education than those from the surrounding communities. Hassan recalled that in the 1970s, when he was attending an UNRWA school in Dheisheh, their teacher had emphasized that because they were refugees they had only one thing to help them survive, and that was education. Hassan did, however, recognize the same trend as Hamid and Rima, that education was not as highly valued as it had been, and even for his own son he had recommended pursuing a career as a police officer rather than continuing on to higher education, as his son had initially considered. Palestinians nevertheless continue to be proud of their high

level of education, bragging about what Palestinian refugees have achieved through studying, but in practice both the quality of education in UNRWA schools[58] and the interest in investing in one's studies has experienced a decline in line with the dwindling possibilities of bettering one's life through education.

As mentioned, the extent to which UNRWA structures the flow of the everyday varies according to the social and legal position Palestinian refugees hold within the host community. In Jordan, the presence of government services in the camps where Palestinians with Jordanian citizenship dwell divides the responsibility. Each camp has its own Camp Services Committee appointed by the Department of Palestinian Affairs, a governmental body that was established in 1988 when Jordan disengaged from the West Bank. The department states that its aim is to "provide all kinds of services, and work on the development of the local communities of refugees, by setting up plans and projects aimed at raising their standard of living and alleviating poverty and unemployment" and, in doing so, to work in partnership with UNRWA[59]. Furthermore, as Luigi Achilli (2015: 55–56, 62–63) has noted, over the decades the Jordanian government has tightened its grip on issues related to the camps, somewhat replacing UNRWA when it comes to camp management. Just as in the West Bank, where the UNRWA refugee card is depicted in the political imagery of refugeeness, in Jordan the card also came to be seen as an indicator of refugeeness and of belonging to Palestine (Achilli 2015: 54–55). But in Jordan it was also described as the sole factor setting the camp refugees and the urban refugees apart from each other: those living in the camps were registered by UNRWA and were thus eligible to receive the services and rations it provided. The majority of Jordanians with a Palestinian background are not registered, because the refugee status issued by UNRWA is based solely on the need for assistance and not on the experience of displacement (see Feldman 2007). Among those who are registered, Palestinians from Gaza with no Jordanian citizenship, and thus no social security number and no health insurance, are the most dependent on UNRWA services. The position of UNRWA in Jordan is thus related to the different status the Palestinian refugees occupy.

In addition to the extent to which UNRWA's actions affected the flow of everyday life, differences emerged in the manner in which UNRWA was discussed. In Lebanon, UNRWA was very much positioned as a service provider, while in the West Bank the discourse was more complicated. The penetration of politics into all fields of life could be detected in how UNRWA was described to me, as a humanitarian response to a non-humanitarian situation: "Even if many Palestinian people disagree with its policies but we do need the UNRWA. Not as a humanitarian

supporter but as a representative of Palestinian people in the international community," was how Munir saw the role of the agency. There are, naturally, Palestinian refugees who need UNRWA precisely as a humanitarian supporter, but this statement tells of the political use to which Palestinian refugees have put the agency (see also Feldman 2008). The stress on this political dimension was most evident in the West Bank, where the reality was that UNRWA was but one player in the everyday lives lived in the camps, and not necessarily even the most important one.

Despite its diminishing services, UNRWA continues to provide the means for building everyday life in the camps, and the degree to which my interlocutors complained about its current state was telling of its relative importance. UNRWA offers schooling, healthcare, hardship support, infrastructural development, camp improvement programs, and employment opportunities for the refugees. It is a crucial actor within the camp landscape and shutting it down would without a doubt result in a humanitarian catastrophe. When Palestinians criticize the quality and scale of these services, blaming the agency for not doing enough or as much as before, they do it from a position of claiming better services. The class sizes in schools, the competence of the teachers, the amount and coverage of healthcare support, the lack of open positions, the limiting of services to only "the neediest of the needy", and the salaries and contracts of Palestinian staff compared with those of international employees were all discussed in a critical tone in order to demand an improvement in the situation. Though a Palestinian field director in Lebanon maintained that the refugees' anger with UNRWA was misdirected, and that the actual accountability lay with the funders, it was nevertheless UNRWA against whom the accusations were made.

Thus, UNRWA is viewed as being of high importance by the refugees who rely on the services and employment opportunities it provides. In Lebanon, an interlocutor even stated that if the cuts continued and UNRWA was closed down altogether Palestinians would have no other option but to turn to terrorism and crime. Though this statement was more an expression of frustration than an actual prediction of the future, many do believe that the political project behind the cuts is precisely that: to see the agency disappear. BADIL, the Palestinian organization for refugees and displaced persons, sees that the very funding system of UNRWA makes the agency vulnerable to political interference, the donor states allocating their contributions to specific programs rather than to the general fund that is used to provide everyday services (BADIL 2018). The conspiracy theory is that by closing down UNRWA, the international community, and Israel in particular (see ibid.), aims

to see the case of Palestinian refugees disappear, or as Munir put it "if UNRWA collapses, *khalas* [enough], there is no Palestinian refugees".

These fears are not without foundation; for example, in the summer of 2017 Israel's then prime minister Benjamin Netanyahu called for the dismantling of UNRWA and the placing of Palestinians under the mandate of UNHCR[60]. Though I once heard the same call coming from a Palestinian refugee, who thought that UNHCR was more efficient in delivering solutions for refugees, for the majority the continuing presence of UNRWA was important, both socially and politically. UNRWA's future is thus closely tied to that of Palestinian refugees, both in providing the services needed to survive everyday life in the camps, but also more existentially as the agency that, by issuing the refugee cards, upholds the recognition of Palestinians refugeeness. Consequently, though it has been claimed that humanitarian reason is incompetent where recognizing the future tense is concerned (Brun 2016), my interlocutors in Palestinian refugee camps, especially in Lebanon, saw their own futures very much tied to that of UNRWA.

6.2   Belonging to a party: employment, support, and special treatment

One evening at the end of April, a crowd was gathering by the Ibdaa Cultural Center with Palestinian flags and political posters. Political songs amplified by loudspeakers filled the air and people waited for the community and civil society leaders to give their speeches. During my fieldwork, it was a rather common occurrence in Dheisheh Camp for the active centers and associations to invite people to political and cultural events, and this particular one was organized in solidarity with Palestinian prisoners and detainees in Israeli jails[61]. As it was taking place just outside the Ibdaa Center, which was located on the camp's border with the main road, many people were simply passing and had no particular intention of attending the event. One of them was Hala, a woman in her late twenties, with whom I ended up chatting while watching the event unfold. She had returned to Dheisheh from the United States some time previously, after living there for almost seven years. After completing her studies, her family had insisted that she return to Palestine and she had reluctantly consented. She had hoped to continue her education further, but because scholarships were difficult to obtain and university fees were too expensive without one, she had little option but to return to her family. When I met her, she had already come to regret it: "Life is so difficult here" she complained. Though the

fact that her family was still living in the camp was a reason for her to come back, it was precisely her family's affiliations that complicated her life in the West Bank. The scarce employment opportunities were further reduced because her kin were known to be members of the leftist PFLP. She stressed that she herself was in no way involved in politics, neither through the PFLP nor any other party, but because of her family name she was nevertheless associated with a party that was known for its criticism of the Palestinian Authority. In the West Bank, the Palestinian Authority led by Fatah is the gatekeeper for many employment opportunities beyond simply those positions within it. Being associated with a political party known to be critical of PA policies thus reduced the possibilities for finding employment and Hala had bitterly experienced the consequences of being associated with the wrong group. Having little hope of finding employment in the West Bank, Hala hoped to have the chance to return to the United States, where she would not face similar obstacles.

For Palestinian refugees, political parties form one of the players that can facilitate or, as in the case of Hala, complicate the flow of everyday life. They are an actor the relevance of which reaches way beyond that of traditional party politics, as they are also important employers, service providers, and sources of support. Being on good terms with them, and having the right connections within them, can provide options in life. The PLO, and the political movements that are part of it, is an important actor, as are the Islamic parties, with Hamas in particular being known for the social services it provides (see Knudsen 2005; Roy 2011). The prominence of the PLO has fluctuated over time, as has that of the refugee communities that have benefited from it the most. After it was established in 1964, the PLO expanded in Jordan, employing guerilla fighters and building its own institution. However, its presence in the kingdom came to an abrupt and bloody end with Black September in 1970. The PLO leadership's arrival with *fedayeen* in Lebanon created opportunities for the Palestinian refugee community that was legally and socially the most deprived. The period that started with the arrival of the PLO and ended in 1982 when Israel invaded Lebanon and forced the Palestinian political movement out of the country is known as *ayyam al-thawra*, the days of the revolution. This period saw not only the strengthening of national self-pride but also the building of Palestinian institutions in the country, and thus a new source of employment and social services (Khalidi 1984). The PLO worked alongside UNRWA in providing basic services and, together with the resistance movement, employed up to approximately 65 percent of the Palestinian workforce in Lebanon (Sayigh 1994: 101). Telling of its significance is that, at its height, the annual PLO budget may have been larger than that of the Lebanese state

and that, by 1982, the Palestinian economy in Lebanon was generating more than 15 percent of the country's gross national product (Hudson 1997: 254).

Consequently, when the PLO was forced to evacuate in the early eighties, it created not only a sense of abandonment among the refugee community, a feeling that their leaders had left them to die at the hands of Lebanese militias and the Israeli military, but also grave economic difficulties, as the financial and social revenue the presence of resistance had brought with it also diminished. Though the PLO continues to have a presence in Lebanon, and it operates in the camps through the Popular Committees, this is on a considerably smaller scale than before 1982. With the Oslo Accords, the PLO leadership was allowed to 'return' to the West Bank, but rather than its being within the rubric of PLO the societal role was taken by the just-created Palestinian Authority and its biggest party, Fatah.

Notwithstanding the decline in the PLO's standing in Lebanon, Yasser, working as a security officer in a camp in Tyre, started our discussion by expressing in a rather straightforward fashion that there were only two options for Palestinians in Lebanon: either to emigrate or to belong to a party. Though Fatah does not have quite the same position in Lebanon as in the West Bank, the connotation of the term *hizb* (party) for Yasser was specifically that of this leading political group in Palestinian party politics. Even in Lebanon, where refugees are not living under the quasi-sovereignty of a Palestinian Authority led by the party, having *wasta* in Fatah and the camp Popular Committees helped in finding employment and getting support when needed.

However, the political affiliations of Palestinian refugee camps differ, Dheisheh being famous for the strong support that the PFLP enjoys among its residents whereas in Arroub camp the majority are thought to be with the PA. Burj Shemali camp in Tyre, on the other hand, is led by a Popular Committee dominated by Fatah, and though in other camps the Popular Committees are structured differently, Fatah membership still opens doors to employment opportunities within the camp, the security forces being a case in point. Young men with rifles man the small checkpoints on the main streets of the camps in Tyre, and the Fatah flags on top of them along with the walls covered in pictures of Yasser Arafat and, to a lesser extent, Mahmoud Abbas, leave no room for doubt as to the party operating them. Yet, actual benefit such armed forces for the camp community was challenged by many, Asma among them. After passing by one of the military posts in Burj Shemali camp, she remarked that those working in them were there only for the monthly salary: "They are just standing there doing nothing at all, they have never been interested in solving a problem or helping others, nothing". Her criticism was directed especially

toward Fatah but also toward the other political parties that she saw as merely paying lip service to the refugees without actually doing anything that would improve their situation. She saw that though in Gaza Hamas was doing something, in Lebanon the parties were all the same, helping themselves but not the people. Many shared Asma's views, that those working in Fatah were there only for their own benefit and not because they hoped to serve the community or enhance the Palestinian political struggle. But for those who had managed to get a job through the party, it enabled them to earn a living and hence provided a possibility for them to continue living in Lebanon, as Yasser had declared.

However, this possibility was not equally available to all. Farid, living in El Buss camp, had tried to apply for membership of Fatah but had come to notice that not only could party membership create *wasta* but getting into a party might also require it. El Buss is known for having two families that are affiliated with Fatah and, without having connections to one of them getting into their circle of support can prove difficult. One reason for Farid trying to become a member of Fatah was in line with what Asma criticized the party members for, to get a salary from the movement to provide for his family. Yet, because Farid did not belong to either of the two families, his membership application was declined with no reason given. Earlier, his wife Samah had explained how only those belonging to these families were given support, food packages, or anything else they might need. Even the support and employment opportunities provided by UNRWA were influenced by these political networks. Farid and Samah complained about not receiving hardship rations from UNRWA when they saw families who were better-off but happened to be connected to the right people getting the support and opportunities.

On a higher level, UNRWA stresses its neutrality and unbiased distribution of aid, yet the refugees' experience of the agency's work is infused with the political *wasta* that exists within the camps. The agency's Palestinian employees are not outsiders to the social networks that structure the refugee communities, and the political connections are one of the resources that enable access to support. Thus, Samah did not get a job she applied for as a kindergarten teacher even though she has a university education, and the post was given to a member of a Fatah family with a lower degree. The family did not get any food rations either, but I saw UNRWA-marked food products in wealthier household with a kin connection to these Fatah families. *Bas wasta* (only connections), was thus how Farid saw that life could be made easier in the camp. Farid's view was partly confirmed by the family quarrels that ensued if a relative working in the political movement was not ready to use their position to secure benefits for the kin.

Samah was not the only one who had experienced the need for political *wasta* in obtaining employment from UNRWA. In Kalandia camp located next to Ramallah, Lina came to notice that her university education did not open doors in the way she had hoped. She had graduated from al-Quds University with political sciences as her major, and she had had high expectations of finding employment related to her field of study. Her expectations had nevertheless collapsed quickly when she was faced with the reality of the employment markets. She had studied hard for four years to gain her degree only to see that people with lower qualifications and who, according to her, did not even deserve the paycheck, took the good positions while she had to start out as a cleaner in a UN center. When I met her, she had worked for the center for ten years and, though she assured me that she was content with her present situation, she still remarked bitterly about those who had it easy because of their links to the PA.

Employment in the PA itself is even more determined by having connections to the right political movement and, as a person lacking *wasta* that would smooth her way in, Lina refused to even take the test that would allow her to work in the government sector because she knew that people passed according to their connections. Everyone hoping to work in the government sector has to take a test, after which their positions within the PA are officially determined according to their qualifications: the type of education and previous work experience they have. Lina nonetheless knew people who had obtained high scores in the test yet had lost out to someone with lower scores but better connections. She had thus decided not to bother, knowing that no matter how well she performed it would not allow her to outdo a person with lower qualifications but who happened to know the right people within the government.

Though the clientelism practiced by Palestinian political movements in distributing resources is a source of discontent, mistrust, and scorn among those not included in the networks of support, for those who have managed to get into the circles it provides the means for everyday life. Refugees, forming the historical basis of the Palestinian resistance movement and the political parties within it, have also benefited as a community from party establishment. As mentioned in the chapter on camp materiality, members of the political movement have been involved in improving the camp infrastructure and they have negotiated a better position for the camp refugees, both sociopolitically and economically. The high level of education among the second generation of refugees who lived their youth in the seventies and early eighties is partly thanks to the political support the PLO enjoyed from the Eastern bloc. Although it was UNRWA that built the basis for education among the

refugees, it was the scholarships granted by the Soviet states that allowed the refugees to continue on to higher education. According to Sari Hanafi and Åge A. Tiltnes (2008), for Palestinians over forty the PLO and the political parties within it formed the single most important source of university scholarships. Especially in Lebanon, where the PLO was based from the 1970s to the early 1980s, it is rather common to meet middle-aged refugees who were educated in the Soviet Union, or other parts of the Eastern bloc, thanks to their affiliation to the resistance movement in their youth.

This possibility has ceased due to the political restructuring of the world, yet the PLO in Lebanon continues to aid refugees who pursue university degrees. In a branch of a private university in Tyre, Omar managed the PLO support for Palestinian enrolled in the city's universities. He explained that the most common reason for Palestinians not continuing their education to university level was the poverty among the refugees: they simply could not afford the tuition fees. "But when you come to me, I help you, give him 50 percent, 45 percent [of the tuition fees] to study at university, at LAU, at Saida Jinan, AUL, we can help him with any percentage […] to study". In Lebanon, private university fees can be notoriously high, and thus many Palestinians continuing on to higher education have opted to apply to the public Lebanese University. However, the number of Palestinians taken in each year is regulated and those admitted are required to have a high level of performance. Since the number of Syrian refugees has increased, the quota for Palestinians has become smaller. Hence, the private universities remain an option for those whose families can afford them, or who manage to get sufficient support for their studies. Yet continuing to receive a high percentage of support also requires a high level of performance and sticking to the field of study the support was granted for; I encountered a case of monetary support being terminated because the student had changed his major without consulting the representatives of the PLO student union, which handles the university scholarships.

In Lebanon, it is the Popular Committees that function as the representative of the PLO and the provider of PLO-sponsored support and services for the residents of the camps and gatherings. Though in reality they have few assets with which to cover all the needs of their refugee residents, they nevertheless function as gatekeepers between the camp dwellers and other actors, such as NGOs that want to operate in the camps and gatherings (see Stel 2016). Though Popular Committees also exist in the West Bank, in Lebanon their standing is more substantial. When doing fieldwork in Lebanon, I was always taken to meet the directors of the Popular Committees at some point during my stay. Through these meetings, my presence

and the reasons for my stay were made known to the official representatives of the camp. The meetings were ceremonial in the sense that the committees had no official control over when and with whom I frequented the Palestinian dwellings, but they were nevertheless important from the perspective of the governing structures within the communities. Similar to what has been described regarding people's conception of the security forces and the leading political parties, the Popular Committees were not necessarily very much liked but it was better to keep on their good side. Despite their limited resources, the committees subsidized not only higher education but also hospital expenses, supplementing the support received from UNRWA. The directors of Popular Committees were also approached in the hope of obtaining at least a little support with everyday expenditure, and when I visited their offices it was specifically the Syrian Palestinians I saw inquiring about such possibilities.

As has been mentioned, Jordan constitutes a slightly different case compared with Lebanon and the West Bank when it comes to the Palestinian political movement. In the West Bank, the presence of Palestinian political parties is self-evident and, in Lebanon, the fragmented state sovereignty with its multiple political stakeholders allows for the existence of yet another political movement with different national-political aspirations. Jordan, on the other hand, is a constitutional monarchy in which the king retains a salient position. Though it was in Jordan where the PLO grew to be a prominent player both for the Palestinian community and as its international representative, the events of Black September proved that the Hashemite Kingdom was not ready to tolerate a competing sovereignty within its borders. The relations between the Palestinian movement and the Jordanian rulers have since normalized, first when the PLO was exiled from Lebanon in 1982 and then in 1984 when, after a brief stay in Damascus, the Palestinian National Council convened in Amman. Nevertheless, Palestinian political parties do not have the same kind of presence in Jordan as in Lebanon. The Palestinian political movement does not thus provide similar opportunities for the camp dwellers in Jordan as it does in my other fields, and hence its role in structuring everyday life remains marginal.

The decline of both the political and economic standing of the PLO has decreased its relevance as a facilitator of everyday life, and the majority of the Palestinian refugees I have met have been rather disillusioned by their political leaders. As revenues have been directed toward the occupied territories since the signing of the Oslo Accords and the establishment of the Palestinian Authority, the provisions available to the refugees have diminished, increasing the sense of abandonment Palestinian refugees also feel on a political level. The corruption and the political decisions taken within the PA have reduced its credibility, especially

among the refugees who feel they have been left on their own to face the Israeli occupier. Munir, active in an organization defending refugees' rights, summarized the atmosphere in the community by noting that the present situation had left Palestinians exhausted, as they had to first fight their own before they could direct their energy toward opposing the occupying power.

Those who did not openly criticize the PA were usually those who had rather opportunistic reasons for not doing so, their livelihoods depending on the political movement. For them, rather than seeking membership for ideological reasons, belonging to a party was a way to build a basis for everyday life, as was openly stated by Yasser in the Lebanese context. Yet, the PLO continues to provide meager assistance also for those who are not directly linked to the party structures, through support with their everyday expenses and education, which can open up new life opportunities. Nonetheless, there are, as has been delineated, differences in how this assistance is made available to Palestinian refugees, as the PLO does not operate in the same manner in all locations of Palestinian exile, and *wasta* provided by kin ties continues to affect how the provisions are distributed.

6.3 Building networks

"There was a fight at the center today", Nassim sighed after we arrived at the NGO premises after finishing an interview elsewhere in the camp. When I inquired after the reason, he explained that two of the active members we both knew had clashed over the possibility of joining a delegation to Europe, both of them desperately wanting to be given the chance: "They work hard the whole year [in the NGO] just to get that opportunity. And it is for ten days, imagine if it would be for ten years". Discussing the matter in a hushed tone, Nassim said that he understood how they felt. Though it was only a short trip, for those traveling it was an important opportunity. Most of them had never been outside the West Bank and the clash had ensued precisely because both of those involved desperately wanted to get a break from everything they had to endure on a daily basis under the occupation.

Though not part of the delegation, Nassim had his own plans for experiencing life abroad. He explained how he had to study hard to earn a stipend that would allow him to continue his education outside Palestine. Eager to get a chance to experience life not tinged by the Israeli occupation, he counted the months and years he would still have to endure before getting the chance to live without the everyday

oppression: "But I have my own contacts, so I don't need this opportunity [provided by the center]".

Networks, both within the Palestinian community and with internationals, were an important resource for my interlocutors, as they provided support to help them to achieve their aspirations. Centers, such as the one where the fight took place, provided one possibility for such networking. In addition to offering meaningful activities for the community and somewhere to make friends and spend time with them, for the members they were also places to create networks that would enable them to build their futures. They were places to meet both locals and internationals, and maybe even to get a chance to travel outside, as part of a youth delegation, a dabka dance group, or another performing ensemble. Though by no means less genuine or only as a means to an end, friendships established with the internationals could nevertheless provide a point of contact with the "outside": they could help in acquiring visas through the provision of an invitation; be a source of information about different opportunities; provide a helping hand with organizing a crowdfunding; or simply be a friendly presence to be in touch with.

It is also well known that in countries housing Palestinian refugees having connections is crucial in facilitating the bureaucratic processes and navigating everyday life situations (see Ramady 2016). The resources covered in the two previous sections also highlight the importance of having *wasta*, which loosely translates as having connections but connotes a more comprehensive system of patronage and complex reciprocal obligations than simply knowing someone. The Lebanese system has been described as political familism (Joseph 2011), in which it is the family connections and different manifestations of kinship structures and family allegiances that form the basis of the political system and are utilized in activating demands and needs. In Jordan, especially since Black September, it has been tribal connections that are at the center when it comes to possibilities to utilize *wasta* (Baylouny 2010: 53), whereas in the West Bank it is connections to the Palestinian Authority that provide "the strong *wasta*", as one of my interlocutors put it.

Wasta is a part of the experience of everyday life that "is intrinsic to the operation of many valuable social processes, central to the transmission of knowledge and the creation of opportunity" (Lackner 2016: 36). This was recognized by my interlocutors as both good and bad, depending on the *wasta* they had at their disposal. Hassan openly elaborated the importance of such relations one evening when we were drinking coffee on the porch of his house, located on the border of Dheisheh camp. He had previously mentioned the importance of strong relationships for the

refugees, how they had enabled them to create life anew after arriving in the camps. These strong relations had turned into something to rely on and draw from when something needed to be done or achieved:

> We try to manipulate these relationships, actually. We try to manipulate it because we believe they are all supporters. And we are all supporters of others. It's a circle, you support me here, I support you there. And this circle, from my point of view, is useful for everyone.

Though stressing the reciprocity of the *wasta* system, Hassan also acknowledged that not everyone was "part of the circle" and thus not able to benefit from it. For him, it was, however, up to the mentality of the people, exemplified by differences between those camp dwellers who were refugees and those who were not:

> Or maybe they have put themselves aside without any relationship with others. Because, as I told you, not all the camp has the same mentality. And, in addition, we have, so many families came to live in the camp, they are not refugees. They came to live in the camp newly, in the past ten or fifteen years. They have different mentality.

Yet, during my fieldwork it became clear that not all those with a refugee background were in the same position when it came to the possibility of utilizing their connections for managing in everyday life. Even those with wide networks within camps, in their surroundings, and even abroad, could lack the right type of *wasta*, the type that would connect them to people with leverage. Hassan himself was in a good situation in this regard. As has been mentioned, his family is connected to the Palestinian Authority, something that makes life in the West Bank considerably easier. Correspondingly, those who openly oppose the Palestinian Authority's policies might not only diminish their and their families' options for making a living in the West Bank but create other types of trouble as well. Though these types of network can be a result of the active efforts of individuals, for many they are simply something into which they are born. The family name and its connotations can either facilitate or hinder them in obtaining services, employment, paperwork, or benefits of some sort.

Of course, the importance of having connections is by no means delimited to Middle Eastern states, but among my interlocutors *wasta* was named as one of the important factors defining their possibilities. The importance of having the right connections came forth concerning not only dealings with state actors but any situation in which help was needed. It also emerged on occasions in which it was the

lack of *wasta* that informed what action should be taken in a situation; this came up, for example, when a friend complained about his friend, who was quarreling with a traffic officer while we were driving in Beirut. My friend complained that he was way too hotheaded, that he should not act in that way in Beirut, where they did not know people as they did in Tyre, meaning that they did not have any *wasta* to negotiate with and could end up in trouble. Though often associated with daily matters, such as dealing with state bureaucracy, for Palestinian refugees having the right networks can even be the threshold that determines whether it is possible to build a life in the present place of dwelling or whether they should try their luck elsewhere.

In all my fields, the everyday conditions of Palestinian refugees only enhance the relevance of *wasta* as, according to anthropologist Helen Lackner (2016), it becomes all the more important when systems of care and social support are dysfunctional. In Lackner's words, in such a situation it is "only those with powerful connections [who] are able to access services which, in theory, should be available for all" (Lackner 2016: 40). The negative side of the *wasta* system emerged in situations in which my interlocutors felt there was no point in even trying because they lacked the requisite connections. They were well aware that employment opportunities were distributed not solely on the basis of the applicants' qualifications but also according to the *wasta* they had. This could be seen not only in the job market, which is usually the context in which the significance of good *wasta* becomes evident (see also Lackner 2016: 42–43), but also in the distribution of other possibilities.

One of those who had become frustrated by how things worked out was a friend living in Rashidieh camp in Lebanon. Her discontent concerned specifically the way in which her workplace selected the participants for workshops. The personal relations between the director and her assistant and the rest of the employees affected the atmosphere, and from the way in which different employees were treated and the work in the center was distributed you could tell who was on the good side of the managers. The workshops were one such example of this centrality of personal relations. For the participants, they not only provided the possibility to develop their competences as employees but also gave them the chance to travel, sleep and eat in hotels, and spend time outside the camp, in Beirut or sometimes even abroad – in Amman for instance. For my friend, another reason to complain was that those participating in the workshops were usually financially compensated and, in contrast to those who were always chosen, who in her words were from rich families, she needed the extra income more.

The relevance of having just the right connections became emphasized in Jordan, where *wasta* came up in practically all the interviews I carried out during my stay.

This is connected to the general prevalence of the "*wasta* system" in Jordan (see Ronsin 2010) but also the legal position of Palestinian refugees. While in Lebanon there are the legislative frames that delimit the possibilities of all Palestinians and in the West Bank the occupation does the same, in Jordan citizenship secures the basic rights for the majority of Palestinians living in the country and thus *wasta* emerges as a major decisive factor in everyday life. As *wasta* is so deeply woven into the fabric of daily life, it is a matter not of whether you have it or not, but rather of its quality, and for the Palestinian camp dwellers in Jordan, the type they are usually lacking is that which would allow them to seek assistance from or employment in the governmental sector.

Connections, however, are not only something that people rely on within the Palestinian community or within the host state; as is exemplified by the occurrence I described at the beginning of this chapter, they can also provide possibilities beyond one's own community. These networks of family and friends across borders can be utilized when hoping to obtain a visa for a holiday or, as observed by Mohamed Kamel Doraï (2003) among others, when hoping to emigrate. Though people usually rely on kinship ties when making such decisions and preparing for emigration, I myself have written letters of invitation, provided answers on the Finnish higher education system, contacted embassies in seeking clarification on visa processes, and helped with filling out forms determining eligibility. These wider networks can provide crucial information on the available possibilities and facilitate their achievement and, in some cases, also provide financial support for making dreams a reality, not only through remittances from relatives but via crowdfunding campaigns advertised and shared on social media.

Relying on the kin

The significance of kin relations in coping with everyday life is so self-evident and so interwoven with everything else that it would be possible to discuss it simply in relation to other topics. Yet, as kinship continues to be a key structurer of social relations in the Middle East, and the Palestinian communities form no exception, I feel the need to raise the importance of the family in managing in the everyday and also as a resource in its own right. In her work, Suad Joseph has repeatedly raised the precedence given to family relations and the relationality they produce over that of the individual, bounded self (e.g. Joseph 1994, 1999, 2005). She speaks of the kin contract and how it

raises expectations that kin care for each other, provide for each other, protect each other, love each other – above all others. In return, kin are expected to privilege family and relationships over and above the self, including respect and acceptance of the authority of males and seniors – above all others. (Joseph 2005: 156)

Kin forms the basic unit of being and evokes sets of rights and obligations that are key to managing in the everyday. My interlocutors, for example, repeatedly explained that it was their fathers' obligation to work to be able to provide for their family. Furthermore, the historical, political, and economic context in which Palestinians live amplifies the centrality of familial support, and Penny Johnson has stressed that

[k]inship economies […] persist and are reconstituted in response to and against the colonial regime, its political economy, and forms of modernity and in the absence of national security and statehood. (Johnson 2006: 54)

When getting married, collecting funds for emigration, or simply managing the household, (close) relatives are often those whom people turn to if their own resources are lacking, and are those who are expected to offer help when the need arises. Many of the situations in which family support is utilized are specifically related to building the futures and thus I provide detailed ethnographic examples in the following chapter that deals with the future tense. Here, however, I discuss the matter on a more general level, aiming to highlight the centrality of the familial frame in the everyday and to being-in-the-world in general.

"We function as a unit" was how the father of my host family explained the centrality of the immediate kin when we were sitting on the balcony on a hot summer evening. He had started the conversation by expressing the pre-eminence of what he called "the Arab relations" and, in his usual manner, he wanted to make me understand how their life-world differed from what he associated with Western, individualistic culture. He continued to elaborate what he meant, by explicating how decisions concerning someone in the family were always made together, never alone by the individual most concerned. Though the centrality of family is self-evident to anyone familiar with the Middle Eastern context, to comprehend how this centrality actually plays out in the everyday might require a little more ethnographic sensitivity from a person accustomed to the individualistic approach to being. Family was described as a lock, as people tied together by a bond that implied reciprocal obligations, and as the main unit, rather than the individual, through which decisions made in life were considered. Though at times viewed also as a burden that produced a set of obligations from which it was not possible to escape, family was more often

viewed as a blessing that ensured that no one had to face life's difficulties alone. Though Diana Allan's ethnography of Shatila camp suggests that kin obligations do not carry as much weight as they used to (Allan 2014: 69–76, 78, 83–85), and I also encountered complaints about how kin ties were no longer that strong and that family members did not help as much as was expected, the immediate family nevertheless continues to be the main resource for coping with everyday life.

Though in no way unique to the Palestinian community in the Middle East, the significance of family networks in overcoming the difficulties of everyday life is amplified when people are deprived of other sorts of support. As with *wasta*, the relative lack of an adequate state support system, together with the tightknit camp communities, only increases the relevance of kin ties. Correspondingly, Anne Marie Baylouny (2010) has explored how official family networks have in fact proliferated in number and importance since the support provided by states, or quasi-state actors such as militias, has been cut due to a change in conditions and in the neo-liberalization of state policies. However, the familial support Baylouny scrutinizes is organized via relatively recently established family organizations to which membership is separately applied, along with a careful cost-benefit analysis, whereas in the case of my interlocutors, family support was something much more organic and essential. The support was often also gendered, men being considered the main providers for the family whereas women engaged in reproductive labor, such as taking care of an elderly grandmother or looking after a relative's children (see also Allan 2014: 74–75).

A concrete example of family support are the remittances that travel in and out of Palestinian refugee communities. It is common for those who have emigrated to provide financial support for those who have stayed behind, and there is a long history in Palestinian refugee communities of emigrating to earn money for the family (e.g. Hanafi 2003; Knudsen 2018; Rosenfeld 2004: 179–182). However, at times money also travels in the other direction. In Lebanon I encountered situations in which the person who had emigrated to Europe had faced difficulties on the way and thus continued to depend on the support of their parents, who in turn turned to their wider kin. Being a burden on families with already scarce resources, these situations also exemplify how emigration was not always able to produce the expected outcomes and, at times, was rather a failed attempt to improve the financial situation of the family.

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Placed on the margins both socioeconomically and politically, with little or no support from state sovereigns, Palestinian refugees are deprived of many of the support systems that could mitigate the problems they face. Yet, they continue to act within the possibilities they have, and my interlocutors have their means of reducing the level of insecurity that the future might hold. They have their networks, their assistance providers, and the means by which to provide at least the minimum in uncertain circumstances. The reliability and functioning of these support systems are out of my interlocutors' hands, yet they are also an outcome of their active engagement and the decisions they have made precisely in the hope of creating better opportunities for surviving in the everyday life of the camps and beyond.

The functioning of support networks has far-reaching consequences, as in the end they determine whether it is possible to continue living in the camps. If there are no services, and no possibility of securing employment or other ways to fulfill the expected obligations, it is difficult to feel confident in the face of the future. Here I have introduced not only the different resources that are available but also their present status, and the overall picture is that there is not as much support as is needed. How my interlocutors try to overcome these difficulties and build a basis for a better life is what I turn to next.

7 The future: hopes for a better life

The chapters thus far have guided us through the past and present, and offered a glimpse at how it is possible to live in the present conditions by utilizing the tools they offer to secure a path to the forthcoming. The chapters have introduced us to the history of the Palestinian refugee condition and tried to explain how Palestinian refugees have arrived in their present situation through the past experiences that have molded the ways in which the present is lived. Understanding both of these temporalities is crucial for the task I turn to next, which is to look at the future as depicted by my Palestinian interlocutors. As the hermeneutic approach suggests, these temporalities are intrinsically tied together, futural anticipations and expectations informing the present, and both of them being informed by the past (Guignon 2016; Kisiel 1969; see also Bryant & Knight 2019: 21–77). In this chapter, and especially in the next, I will elaborate how past is brought into negotiation with the present when considering and justifying the decisions made about the future. The future being the obscurest temporality to grasp, I briefly return to the premises introduced in chapter 2, regarding how futurity is drawn to the everyday and how to approach it with an ethnographic method.

For an anthropologist to observe the future tense it is necessary to contemplate in which situations the future becomes part of the present. This includes observing the cultural, societal, economic, and political context in which the future emerges, and acknowledging the importance of understanding the different temporalities as tied together. In chapter 2 I discussed the fruitfulness of contemplating hopes and aspirations and the modality of waiting in considering how my interlocutors see their future(s), as these allow the future to be considered as it becomes part of everyday situations. These modalities incorporate both the social and the individual dimensions of futurity, as tradition directs the ways in which they are structured, in the sense both of what is deemed desirable and what is deemed possible. Here I will scrutinize how hopes and aspirations are negotiated in this temporal moment by those who are just reaching adulthood. As elaborated in the first two chapters, the focus on young adults derives both from the ethnographic encounters and from the fact that young adults are at a specific point in building their lives. They form the cohort for whom the quality and quantity of possibilities that are available in the

present moment have far-reaching consequences, as they are beginning to set the course of their adult lives.

The shape that hopes and aspirations take is always formed in a context, and hence the answer to finding a way to better conditions is negotiated in the community in which one lives. As Appadurai (2004: 67) writes,

> "[a]spirations are never simply individual (as the language of wants and choices inclines us to think). They are always formed in interaction and in the thick of social life.

The plans to achieve aspirations are negotiated within the frame of a social imaginary, that

> gives us a sense of who we are, how we fit together, how we got where we are, and what we might expect from each other in carrying out collective practices that are constitutive of our way of life. (Gaonkar 2002: 10)

The future, and the hopes and aspirations it holds, emerges within these social imaginaries within which

> we see ourselves as agents who traverse a social space and inhabit a temporal horizon, entertain certain beliefs and norms, engage in and make sense of our practices in terms of purpose, timing, and appropriateness, and exist among other agents. (ibid.)

When this social life is lived in contexts of increased and protracted uncertainty, planning for the future might feel meaningless (see Johnson-Hanks 2005). Yet, the question here is not whether plans made will in the end come to fruition, but what the available, and socially and culturally reinforced, routes to be taken are, and where they are thought to lead. There are thus patterns of how to achieve one's (individual) hopes and aspirations.

Though hopes and aspirations provide a route to ethnographic explorations on the future(s), ultimately their intrinsic quality is to remain opaque and constantly in flux. As my Palestinian friend in Lebanon put it, every time he makes plans for the future, something happens that forces him to reconsider them in the light of the new circumstances. Due to this obscurity of the future tense, I have chosen to approach it through concrete life stages that are central to my interlocutors' social imaginaries, rather than abstractly describing the hopes and desires themselves. I will concentrate on education, finding employment, and getting married. These life events are formative in building the future as they direct toward it in different manners. All

three of them can be realized in different ways, and they can fulfill different desires by directing toward different spatialities, as I will elaborate shortly. They are also closely linked to a certain age, that of young adults, and thus reflect the demographic of my interlocutors.

Though approached through the individual, it should be kept in mind that futures are negotiated within the frame of the community, family and wider kin, that the future is never a purely individual project but is undertaken by a self that emerges from the relational (Joseph 1999). It is this relational aspect that, in fact, intensifies the need for negotiation, as hopes, obligations and expectations emerge within the community, and it thus defines the different registers of future that need to be addressed. First, I will consider how education emerges as a major component of the future-building of my interlocutors. Education can, and should, be seen as having value in itself, but it is also a forward-looking activity that is driven by a desire to attain a certain profession, certain competences, a certain lifestyle, and a certain structuring of the everyday. A high level of education is part of the national "sense of perfection" (Hage 2009a: 67), something that Palestinian refugees are proud of, and something that offers an example of how it is possible to enhance one's quality of life as a Palestinian refugee.

Second, I will look at the process of finding work. Though embedded in the everyday in its present, employment is key to building futures, as it very much determines whether one is able to build the type of life one hopes for. Without employment, many things in life become unattainable, or at least tinged with uncertainty. Economic precariousness most definitely shrinks the horizon of possibilities, especially when considered on the level of the everyday rather than on a grander, political scale (cf. Feldman 2016). Correspondingly, the possibility of finding employment is behind many decisions, whether they be choosing the field of study, seeking ways of accessing the scarce work opportunities, or opting for emigration.

In the Palestinian context, as in the Middle East in general, getting married is an important part of the personal trajectory. It forms a passage to adulthood that provides meaning and structure to life in terms of "purpose, timing, and appropriateness" (Gaonkar 2002: 10). Yet, marriage can also be a way to achieve a better life and to attain hoped-for things from the future. For my interlocutors, getting married was never a simple mission of finding someone they felt comfortable with; it included more multidimensional negotiations regarding the life the marriage would facilitate. In the rest of the chapter, I concentrate on these three life stages –

education, finding employment, and getting married – and consider how they project toward the future or even make a future possible.

7.1   Education: prospects for a desired future

"Education is not only a right, but a passport to human development that opens doors and expands opportunities and freedoms"[62]. This is how the United Nations describes the force that education has in making a change for the better and, as well as beautifully delineating the future-directed nature of education, it also describes the ideals that underpin the value of education for Palestinian refugees (e.g. Chatty 2009). As discussed previously in chapter 5.1 on UNRWA services, Palestinian refugees have traditionally been extremely proud of their high level of education. For those with less fortunate starting points, succeeding in their studies can be important in opening doors to better futures. Arjun Appadurai has, nevertheless, noted that

> among the many ways in which the poor are excluded from the benefits of participation, especially in multicultural democracies, is […] their exclusion from the institutions of education, career-building, expertise, and the opportunities to expand their sense of their own possibilities for self-development. (Appadurai 2013: 210)

Thanks to the multiple scholarships targeting Palestinian refugees, and the access to basic education provided by UNRWA, my interlocutors' educational prospects were not as dim as for the poor in other parts of the world. The level of education has also been enhanced by those refugee families who have seen it as valuable and important to invest in their children's schooling. In fact, the commitment to a high level of education "is an important part of family dynamics and aspirations and […] even a key component of Palestinian national hopes and identities" (Johnson 2006: 88).

  In the refugee camps, I have met many people who have continued their education all the way to master's level. For the first generation of refugees, supporting education was a way to secure a better future for their children who had few other resources on which to rely. Education was often juxtaposed with the resources available to Palestinian refugees before Nakba, which for the camp refugees, of whom an overwhelming majority were from a peasant background, meant earning their livelihood from the land. Hence Jaber, a teacher living and working in Dheisheh camp, also talked about this lack of other resources, specifically

the lack of land (*arid*), when he proudly listed all the different degrees that could be found among the camp dwellers:

> Of those who studied in the camp and are from the camp, there are hundreds who have master's degree or a PhD on different fields and there are thousands who have the bachelor's degree. And the reason why so many of the educated Palestinians are refugees is because they don't have land, they don't have other resources, so they depend on their education. It's their only option. The refugee proves himself through the education. Those in the villages, they have land, and they can always work on their land.

The changing reality has, however, eroded the power education has to automatically improve everyday life and, while the importance of education has prevailed, the types of future it can provide and that are expected from it have been adapted to the changing circumstances.
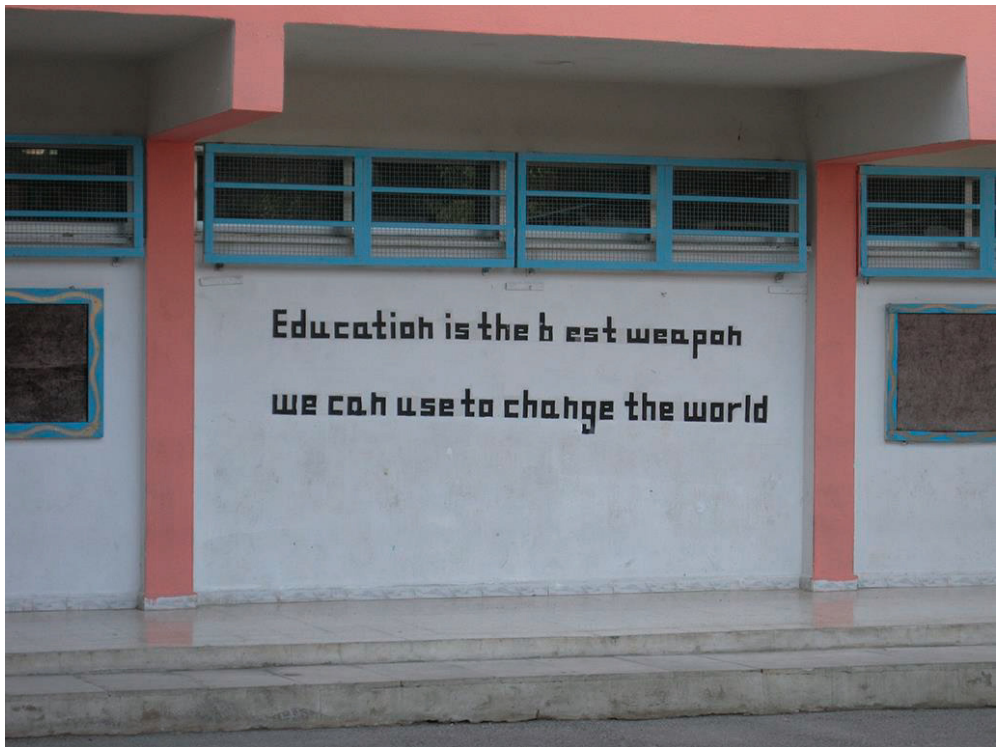

Figure 7 Mural on an UNRWA school in El Buss camp, Tyre, Lebanon

Negotiating the national virtue amid restrictions

I met Asma for the first time in the courtyard of a university campus in Tyre. Hanan, a friend studying at the same university, had taken me there to meet other Palestinian students and to talk with her friend Omar, who was the representative of the Palestinian Student Union in the universities within southern Lebanon. While I was sitting there chatting with the students about their studies, their plans, the situation in Palestine since the series of knife attacks that had taken place that autumn, and my reasons for going there to talk with them, Asma was the only female student who approached me. She was outgoing, and eager to get a chance to practice her English. Furthermore, as she later explained, she simply enjoyed meeting new people and having the chance to get to know them, unlike many of her friends who according to her were much shyer. Straightaway, she invited me to visit her family home in one of the Palestinian camps in Tyre, and I ended up going there time and again during my fieldwork. Back then, Asma was a first-year student studying nutrition and dietetics as her major. This subject, however, would not have been her first choice had she had every possible option at her disposal, but it was the closest she could get to being a doctor given her family's financial means. Yet, with her rather positive attitude that had reconciled itself with the limitations she had due to her family's economic position, Asma had reasoned that as a nutritionist, much like as a doctor, she would have the chance to have her own clinic, which was something she had dreamed of for a long time.

Asma was not the only person I met who had to opt out of their most desired career path when applying to university. Hanan had also ended up studying a subject she had been the least passionate about at school or, in her words, the subject she had hated the most. It was, nevertheless, one of the few that her family could afford and that could, at the same time, provide at least a small chance of finding employment after graduation. To help her family to cover her tuition fees, and to earn a little money for herself, she tutored students from an UNRWA school in her home, though teaching was also something she did not enjoy. When I asked her whether she had learned to like her field of study while at university, her answer was the rather cynical "I like it because of money", signaling that she did not have the luxury of following her own preferences and passions as the reality faced by Palestinians in Lebanon predetermined the options available to her.

As has been discussed in the previous chapters, Palestinians in Lebanon face several legislative restraints when trying to enter the employment markets, which has profound effects on the socioeconomic situation of Palestinian families and thus on

daily life in the camps. Educational trajectories are also molded by these restraints, in that they determine both the possibility of entering university and the fields of study that are worth aspiring to. Studying medicine in order to become a physician might be seen as prestigious, but it is not the most practical choice due to the high tuition fees for medical programs in Lebanon and the very limited possibilities that Palestinians have to work in the profession. Though it is possible to get support from various sources to cover the fees, many students still opt out of higher education simply because their families cannot afford it, or because they need the extra income their children – especially the sons – can bring into the household if they manage to find work.

Like the majority of universities in Lebanon, the one I visited with Hanan was a private institution and, among the private universities in southern Lebanon, it was the one with the largest percentage of Palestinian students. Only the public university, the Lebanese University that had a campus in Saida, had more Palestinian students enrolled. The tuition fees in the public university were lower than in the private ones yet getting on to its study programs required better grades and a high level of performance, as Palestinian students were enrolled in accordance with a preset quota, which had diminished since Syrian refugees had also started to enter the university. In private universities, the difficulty in getting in had more to do with family finances, and the reason the university I visited had a higher number of Palestinians than other private universities was because it subsidized their fees.

Though there are cases of discrimination and obstacles created by quotas, most of the difficulties are, in fact, financial in nature, as Omar explained when listing the problems Palestinians face in continuing on to higher education in Lebanon. The Palestinian Student Union for which he worked was able to cover part of the tuition fees, a percentage of support depending both on the financial situation of the family and the academic success of the student, while *wasta* also played its role in the background in determining who ended up getting the support, as I came to notice during my fieldwork. There were, however, more students to help than there was funding for, and thus higher education was not even an option for many simply due to the costs it entailed.

Asma and Hanan were thus among the lucky ones to actually study at university, even though neither of them was able to enter the study program about which they were most passionate. Being a Palestinian in Lebanon means that one is forced to let go of aspirations that are deemed unachievable by the legal framing of the everyday. Why study to be a doctor if the only place one can find work is UNRWA hospitals, which are constantly battling with insufficient funding? Why study to be a lawyer or

pursue a career in academia knowing that Palestinians are unable to be employed in sectors regulated by labor syndicates?

Appadurai suggests (2013: 188–189) that those with fewer resources to try out different paths in life have a "more brittle horizon of aspirations", and thus a lesser capacity to aspire. While my interlocutors might have had high hopes for their educational paths, due to the conditions in which they lived they were forced to tone these down to a level that was actually within their reach. The possibility of pursuing education was one of the contexts in which the financial limitations of my interlocutors manifested. Yet, though my interlocutors openly talked about the poverty that was present in their communities, in the West Bank and Lebanon it was described as an outcome of their Palestinianess, of the treatment they were subjected to specifically because they were Palestinians, rather than as a manifestation of the same processes of unequal distribution of wealth and capital that have resulted in poverty around the world (see also Perdigon 2015). In Jordan, on the other hand, the limited possibilities could not be reduced to having a Palestinian background, and it was the discrimination they faced as camp dwellers that my interlocutors turned to in explaining the limited resources they had for building their lives in the way they wanted. These conditions characterizing Palestinian refugees' experiences in different locations of exile were reflected in their educational aspirations, by being the context not only *in* which but *against* which education was pursued.

In pursuing education, my interlocutors were thus forced to acknowledge "the facts on the ground". Their agency was conditioned, in the manner in which Kathleen Stewart (2007: 86) describes it:

> Agency can be strange, twisted, caught up in things, passive, or exhausted. Not the way we like to think about it. Not usually a simple projection toward a future. […] It's not really about willpower but rather something much more complicated and much more rooted in things.

The things, the relations, the conditions, the histories, the materiality, and the always complicated lived reality frame how actions become possible and also what form they can take and, as Judith Butler (2004: 16) stresses, "[o]ur acts are not self-generated, but conditioned", leaving us to navigate obstacles that our positionings have placed in our way. When my Palestinian interlocutors pursued their paths in education, they had to acknowledge "the things" with which their personal aspirations could become entangled.

In Asma's case, these things were not only the general shared conditions that Palestinians encountered in Lebanon, but also the more private conditions specific

to her family. She had Lebanese citizenship, which allowed her a somewhat better starting point as it provided a wider horizon when it came to possible employment – at least in theory. What is also relevant for her path to a university education is that both her parents were highly educated, and had met while studying abroad. Educated in UNRWA schools before entering university, Asma worked hard at her studies and was supported to do so by her family. Though I heard her high school teachers criticizing her choice of discipline, pointing out that they had hardly ever heard of anyone visiting a nutritionist and scolding her for not choosing something that would secure a less precarious income, for her the studies provided the possibility to gain a profession in which she could have her own clinic and to interact with people, both of which were important for her. After finishing her bachelor's degree, she planned to continue on to a master's, though she was not sure whether she would be able to do so, at least in Lebanon.

The spatiality of higher education

Naturally, high tuition fees exclude the financially less fortunate around the world from higher education. Being a Palestinian camp dweller often connotes that one belongs to this group of the less fortunate, and I encountered examples of this in all of my fields. Furthermore, being a Palestinian means that one experiences other than economic forms of exclusion, which also affect the possibilities to seek education, though more so in Lebanon and the West Bank than in Jordan. Nevertheless, UNRWA schools and vocational training centers have secured a basic level of education for Palestinians, and the pride felt over the high level of education among Palestinian refugees has reinforced the appeal of seeking higher education. Palestinians are thus not among those deprived of educational opportunities altogether; rather, they fall into a category that Appadurai (2013: 270) describes as those who have "the means and wish to expand their horizons and improve their lives", but not have the possibilities to freely negotiate their educational paths.

Some of my interlocutors had been forced to put their academic aspirations on hold and to settle for waiting for an opportunity to reveal itself. In the West Bank, a friend who had the academic ability to stay at university for as long as he wanted, confessed that he always envied those who came to the camp to do fieldwork for their master's or doctoral theses because that was something he also hoped to do. Yet, he was forced to terminate his university career after finishing his bachelor's degree because continuing to master's level was just too expensive. He, nevertheless,

still hoped to get the possibility to continue, and while waiting for that chance to present itself he had found other ways of channeling his scholarly ambitions. For him it was also clear that the possibilities were much better outside Palestine, and hence he worked hard at improving his language skills, to enhance his chances of mobility.

Even when a high level of education fails to secure good employment, succeeding in education continues to provide another important and desired opportunity, namely, a route out. In Gaza camp, Amal was very open about the fact that one reason she was studying was not because she liked school or because she was interested in educating herself but because good grades could give her the possibility to earn a scholarship to continue her studies abroad, and thus pave a way out of the camp. In Lebanon, I was repeatedly asked about the prospects of continuing studies in Finland or in other European countries and, in the West Bank, Jaber used the success stories of those from Dheisheh who had received the chance to continue their education in Europe or the United States to encourage his students to work hard.

In Lebanon, traveling abroad to study was usually the first step toward a more permanent emigration, but in the West Bank it was more often described as a phase after which the students would return to Palestine, or at least that was what was expected of those who left. Those I met who had done so were not always happy to come back but had ended up doing so because of family pressure or because they were not ready to become irregulars by overstaying their visas. Yasim had returned to live in a camp in southern West Bank after completing his studies in business management and conflict resolution in the United States. On his return, he had managed to find work on development projects, but after the projects had ended he had not been able to find a new job. Due to his unemployment, Yasim had started to regret his return. His fate was one that many highly educated Palestinians faced in the West Bank. If they did not have *wasta* in the government sector, project-based contracts were the only form of employment they could find, and these were often notoriously insecure.

Nevertheless, studying abroad was still an appealing option for many in the West Bank, first, because it was a more affordable way to get a higher degree and, second, because it offered a possibility to experience normal life without occupation, as Nassim explicated. Hence, when Nada, a 21-year-old woman living with her family just outside Kalandia camp, got the chance to enroll in a university in California, she took it. When I met Nada in the spring of 2016, she had already spent some time in

the United States and was in the middle of preparations for a longer stay outside Palestine, as she was starting her studies that autumn.

As we sat together after getting her vaccination record sorted for the paperwork she had to submit before traveling, she confessed that after finishing high school she had wished for nothing more than the possibility to emigrate, but after the time she had spent abroad and her consequent return to Kalandia, she had become more attached to her home country, and was now rather reflective about her future after getting the degree. Nada's father had studied abroad, in Eastern Europe, but had felt the need to return to build his country and work for his people, and hence he moved back to live in Kalandia camp, and now Nada was contemplating the same. When recollecting her first stay in the United States, Nada confessed to having conflicting feelings about her studies there and, like her father, she had started to feel that she had obligations toward her own country:

> I actually felt the same [as my father] when traveling to US last year. I felt like I left everyone stuck here and I'm happy, like I'm taking a big chance to maybe enjoy. For them [other Palestinians] it's enjoying, whoever travels. That's why you find many, most of the youth, the majority just wants to leave and establish, or start a new life. No matter what it is but they think it would be better than staying here. All these humiliations that they face every day, and the difficulties.

Though staying on the land was an oft-repeated manifestation of Palestinians' *sumud*, the steadfastness against the oppression they faced, in reality many merely hoped to live the kind of normal life that was not available to them in the occupied West Bank. Though going to university might seem a rather straightforward endeavor, for those in the West Bank it often meant exposing themselves to harm and humiliation and compromising their physical integrity while crossing the checkpoints. For those in universities, continuing their studies abroad provided a possibility to experience life without occupation, and Nada also wanted to have that experience and to develop herself while doing so.

However, Nada was in a rather different position than many of her compatriots. She had gained US citizenship through her mother who had, in turn, received it from her uncle who had lived in the United States for more than thirty years. The citizenship provided Nada with an opportunity to live in the United States, and in that way build the basis for the kind of future she hoped for:

> I think each one of us must just, like we shouldn't just be waiting for our faith, just like where we're gonna end up, what the destiny's gonna look. I think, like, for example I wanna make the best out of what I have now. A lot of

> people say you're lucky you are leaving, you're lucky you're going to the States, you're lucky, you're lucky, you're lucky. But I'm just actually going there for the degree, you know.

Nada had many plans that saw her returning to Palestine after completing her studies. She often returned to her idea of founding a new NGO in Palestine, in which she could implement her own vision of what her community needed. She hoped to be able to provide more assistance for those families who were unable to even consider seeking a life elsewhere, so that they could at least survive with dignity in their own country, as she phrased it: "Because day after day we are completely losing our dignity, everywhere we go, in everything that we do". She saw that unlike Palestinian refugees in Lebanon, who for her were "the literate meaning of having nothing in their hands", she and others living in Palestine had better chances to do something, to make something of their lives by creating their own opportunities. That was also her reasoning for going to the United States to study:

> That's why I'm thinking, like, I have the American citizenship but at the same time I cannot benefit from it if I'm here. So, I'm saying, if I have the opportunity to leave and get a higher education then why not, definitely I will come back.

Before her departure, Nada planned to produce a short film that she could show to people at her university, because during her first stay she became frustrated by how little her classmates knew about life in Palestine. In that way, she could do something for her people while building her own future in the United States. Nada's commitment to her homeland was reflective and sincere, but it also demonstrated the politically enforced discourse of being a Palestinian refugee, who is expected to be dedicated to the cause. As Nada was going against the form of *sumud* practiced by staying on the land, she was negotiating her position in relation to steadfastness by considering it her responsibility to educate others while abroad.

Among my interlocutors, both Asma and Nada were in a somewhat special situation as their citizenship status gave them possibilities that were not available to most of the youths I met during my fieldwork. Though Lebanese citizenship was not highly valued among Palestinians – many, Asma among them, were quick to acknowledge that the Lebanese did not have a good life either and were unable to achieve things without having the right connections – having a nationality nevertheless made everyday life easier, including traveling, as Palestinians without citizenship held only handwritten travel documents. For Asma, the citizenship enabled her to travel to Turkey without having to apply for a visa, which again made

the possibility of living there for a longer time in the future achievable. Nada, on the other hand, was in an even better position because her US citizenship gave her opportunities that many Palestinians could only dream of. She could expand her horizon and experience life without occupation, and though she had plans to return to Palestine after completing her master's degree, by 2019 she had settled in the United States for good and only returned to Palestine during the summers to visit her family.

As with anything concerning the future, the planned educational paths of my interlocutors were, and are, full of uncertainties, both internal and external. The plans vocalized concerning educational choices could be elusive, and even contradictory as they incorporated different hopes and expectations. In 2016, Nada was convinced that she would be returning to Palestine after earning her degree, yet even then she had the aspiration to work in the White House. She had already consulted a professor who had advised her which subjects to specialize in, and she was determined to work hard on achieving her dream. As with anyone in their early twenties, Nada's plans for her future were still taking shape, but she was extremely determined to work hard to make at least some of them a reality. In her plans, education was a stepping-stone to the future she hoped to achieve, whether to establish a new organization in Palestine or find employment in the United States.

Scholarship to a brighter future

In the way in which educational paths are negotiated it is possible to detect the expected and hoped-for futures, as education is central in defining the forms one's life can take. For my interlocutors, it was a way to seek change within not only their temporal trajectory but also the spatial one, for education offered ways to explore life outside the borders of their host countries. It is clear that educational opportunities are unequally distributed across the world, and those who do not have the possibilities close by are forced to be mobile. For decades, Palestinians have traveled to different parts of the world to educate themselves, and many have returned to the camps to work in their communities. At present, however, as the horizons of opportunities are shrinking and the political situation gives little hope, the appeal of emigrating permanently is evident, especially in Lebanon and the West Bank. For those in universities, student visas secured by scholarships provide one opportunity to do this.

Getting a scholarship to continue studying abroad was an attractive option for many, and there exist, in fact, multiple programs specifically targeting Palestinian students on their academic paths[63]. The scholarship programs offer a way to pursue academic aspirations and develop oneself while earning a degree and, especially for Palestinians residing in Lebanon, they also offer a way out. Of the people I met on the university campus in Tyre, some left during the months of my fieldwork, and since then other such cases have also come to my knowledge. The dim chances university graduates have for finding employment in Lebanon encourages them to use university studies as a route to a more permanent emigration. Of the young men I chatted with at the university, not a single one expressed a desire to stay in Lebanon event to finish their studies. Rather, they asked me which countries in Europe were the best to emigrate to and continue their educational trajectories.

As a Palestinian living in Jordan without citizenship, for Amal education was specifically a means to an end. She confessed that the sole reason for her committing to her studies was to earn a scholarship abroad, which she ultimately was unable to achieve. She readily declared that she did not have academic ambitions for their own sake and that her studies were a means of achieving something else she desired. Though Palestinian refugees living in Jordan are generally in a somewhat better position compared with refugees in Lebanon and the West Bank, those without citizenship – meaning the Palestinian refugees originating from the Gaza Strip – face many of the same problems as their stateless compatriots in Lebanon. Amal belonged to this category of Palestinians, and her expectations from education were a manifestation of the conditions she experienced.

Like Palestinians in Lebanon, the ex-Gazans are excluded from certain fields of employment, which has lessened the meaningfulness of their seeking education in those fields in the first place. In public universities, they are treated as international students, meaning they have to pay higher tuition fees. For them to access public universities while paying the same fees as Jordanian citizens, they have to excel in their final high school exams (*tawjihi*), which might allow them to earn a place in the royal quota system[64]. The number of students enrolled through this system is nevertheless limited and, as the number of applicants far exceeds the places available, many are excluded from university education due to the sheer impossibility for them to pay the non-Jordanian fees of public universities or the much higher fees of private universities. In contrast, while those with citizenship experience poverty and the compromised living conditions in the camps as well as the general lack of *wasta* and the negative characteristics connoted with the camp dwellers, when seeking

higher education their horizons are nevertheless not as determined by their status as are those of Palestinian refugees.

The scholarships provided by different organizations are crucial for those with limited financial means, yet even these can be a source of anxiety. Amal's sister was experiencing this at first hand, as she had been excluded from tuition support because she was not able to fulfill all the requirements set by the organization providing the funding. The reasoning for the withdrawal of the support was based on her absence from a mandatory part of the program that took place in Amman, to where it was impossible for her to travel from her camp, for both economic and communal reasons. While she was negotiating her re-enrolment in the support program, the continuation of her studies relied on the private support of individuals who had managed to put together the money needed for the tuition fees.

In Jordan I had the chance to talk with Samira, who works for an organization granting scholarships to Palestinian refugees to study in the United States. After working for eight years as an employee, she had established her own organization a year and a half before I got in touch with her, in order to work in line with her own standards in guiding her students through the whole experience of studying abroad. This included not only granting the scholarships but also preparing the students to leave their homes and helping them to adjust to their new environment, and the guidance was continued in the United States through tutoring, not only in their studies but also in their everyday lives. In her work, Samira had encountered many cases of educational opportunities being pursued precisely because they offered a chance to escape the misery experienced in the camps. She encountered youths who did not have clear plans for their future but were simply desperate to get out from the conditions in which they were living.

Samira acknowledged the declining quality of the schooling provided for Palestinians, but she nevertheless stressed that the UNRWA schools formed the basis for her organization's work, that without UNRWA there would be very few Palestinian refugees qualifying for the scholarships. Consequently, even with the significant hardships experienced in them, UNRWA schools continued to provide a route for enhancing life prospects through education. Samira's organization worked with Palestinian students with a refugee background from Lebanon, Jordan, the West Bank, and Gaza, and she had clear views on what were the typical and stereotypical characteristics of students coming from each of these contexts. In her experience, students from Jordan had the easiest time adjusting to their new environment. Like all the other students, they were also from the camps and thus had not experienced a high standard of living, yet, thanks to the stability of the Jordanian state and their

verified status as its citizens, they did not have as many psychological disorders, as she called them, as Palestinian refugees from other areas. According to her, those from Lebanon tended to have a sense of entitlement, that the world owed them, whereas young men from the West Bank were more self-assured, to such an extent that they came across as a little arrogant.

Yet, when it came to the motives for seeking higher education in the United States, there were many similarities in the students' stories:

> All the students have one thing in common and that is, the ones that I inherited [from the organization I worked for before], not the ones I work with [now], but they were coming to over here to escape their misery and that their hard work at school had offered them this opportunity, and they really did hustle to get on the top. So, they share this attitude of telling you what they think you want to hear so they can have this opportunity. They all tell you that they want to study in America so that they can go back home and improve the lives of their families, which we all know is not necessarily the truth, returning home I mean.

She had also noticed that a shared burden for the students was the pressure from their families, who often had unrealistic expectations for them to graduate fast and start earning money to send back to them. In the field, I encountered this especially in Lebanon, where emigration in general was supported by extended families not only because they wanted to see their relatives succeed in building better lives for themselves but also in the hope that it would bring remittances back home and thus improve the living standards of those who stayed behind. The need to support their families was reflected in what the students hoped to study, with expected level of income being a major factor in the molding of their preferences. In Samira's explanation of how they all wanted to become doctors or engineers, I immediately recognized the multiple encounters I had had with children and youths in the camps. Becoming a doctor, a lawyer, or an engineer was part of the litany they repeated to me and, among the actual students I have met, fields such as engineering, business and IT have been well-represented. As showcased by the comments Asma received from her high school teachers on her choice of nutrition as her major, choosing a field with more precarious possibilities to earn a living could be harshly criticized.

The high value associated with prestigious titles earned from prestigious institutions also meant that many expressed a hope to study at universities such as Harvard, to which Samira's answer was a strict "we don't do that". She also saw that the reason students preferred fields that led to high-earning employment was simply that they had been brought up that way, and in her work she had seen many changing

their major after the first year at university as their future horizons had widened on being exposed to the different options available.

Similar to the way Nada felt after living outside the West Bank, those enrolled in the scholarship program run by Samira experienced guilt about the fact that they had left their families to struggle on their own. For those coming from the West Bank, and especially from Gaza, the guilt was accompanied by a fear about what might happen to their families while they were gone, that they would get arrested or, in the worst-case scenario, be killed by the Israeli forces. In a similar manner, the vulnerability and precariousness in which my interlocutors were brought up molded their views on their possibilities, on what was achievable, and on what might happen to them or their families while they were pursuing their futures. For those in both Lebanon and the West Bank, traveling abroad to study might mean not seeing their families for an extended period while simultaneously carrying the responsibilities and expectations placed on them. The traveling itself is not a simple matter either; it includes many uncertainties, from waiting for the visa to the actual experiences of the journey and the settling into a new environment without one's family.

A promise of a better life?

The meanings of the future are very much defined by the positions created by the life stages in which it is encountered; in the case of education, these are youth and early adulthood. As Marc Augé (2014: 19) has reminded us, we are beings engaged with time and our age situates us differently in relation to the future and its different aspects. Expectations, hopes, fears, impatience, and desires are experienced differently at different ages, and many of these can emerge with force at a life stage in which both important future-forming decisions are made and leaps from one life stage to another are expected. The level and quality of education determine the future prospects rather comprehensively and thus they were closely observed by many parents. They themselves had already built the basis for their adult lives but providing their children with better chances was an important part of their own life-building.

In Lebanon, Rima told me that she was hoping to emigrate precisely because of her children's futures, for them to get a better education and find better chances to build their lives. Parents were also active concerning higher education, as they invested their meager resources in tuition fees and, while preferring to keep their children close, nevertheless looked for possibilities that would enable them to develop by studying abroad, in some cases turning to me to get more information

on the different options. Hence, though education emerged as a major future-building choice in the lives of my younger interlocutors, it cannot be observed only from the perspective of an individual; rather, it is a project of the whole family. Possibilities for good education were thus also important for older refugees who had already established their lives in one way or another, as they were constantly looking out for their children, trying to secure them the best possible futures by offering them the best possibilities they could with their limited resources.

As with everyone, Palestinian refugees' hopes and expectations are negotiated within what Appadurai calls the cultural systems – a combination of norms, dispositions, practices, and histories – that "frame the good life as a landscape of discernible ends and of practical paths to the achievement of these ends" (Appadurai 2013: 292). Education has traditionally been the principal means through which the refugees can achieve the socially affirmed form of a good life but, at present, everyday encounters have come to erode somewhat the meaningfulness of this path. In both Lebanon and the West Bank, it was the university graduates who were struggling, more so than those with vocational training. Not only are university fees extremely high in both places compared with income levels, meaning that sending their children to university entails an enormous financial contribution from the family, but those doing manual labor also have better prospects of finding work and earning a decent salary. In the West Bank, those working in manual labor are able to bring home higher salaries and have more a secure income than the majority of those with higher education. In Lebanon, many university graduates ended up sitting around at home because they could not find work due to the legislation that excluded Palestinians from most employment requiring a university degree. In Jordan, Amal told me about a joke they had in the camp, that those pursuing higher education just ended up waiting the four years it took to earn their degree to then work in the same jobs as those with no education. It was thus easy to detect the disillusionment with education's capacity to ensure enhanced standards of living.

Where education has ceased to secure employment or to enable a brighter future through the climbing of the socioeconomic ladders, it has become increasingly hard to convince the youth in the camps of the meaningfulness of spending their time on the school bench and continuing their education. Nevertheless, for some of my interlocutors higher education remained the possibility to improve their lives. It emerged as a reason or a means for emigration, and it was a step toward the plans they had for their futures. In Lebanon, this was in fact a major pro of a university career, especially for my male interlocutors who had the pressure of finding employment after completing their studies in order to support their family and start

one of their own. Studies abroad were a way to emigrate for good, as the employment markets inside Lebanon had little to offer Palestinians with a university degree. The same hope to expand one's knowledge also emerged in the West Bank through exchange studies, though for slightly different reasons and with different hopes concerning the students' spatial trajectories.

Jordan, again, proved to be the place with the greatest variation in, and the fewest official limitations hindering, the educational paths of my Palestinian interlocutors. In fact, Jordanian universities also attract West Bank Palestinians and even those Palestinians with Israeli citizenship (see Arar 2011). The relatively integrated position of Palestinians as Jordanian nationals and the stability of the country means there is much less to worry about than there is for Palestinian refugees living in Lebanon and the West Bank. Nevertheless, even in Jordan the general economic situation and high youth unemployment rates mean that education is not able to secure access to labor markets, at least not in the same field as one's degree.

Education's appeal among the refugees has been very much linked to its power to facilitate improvements in living conditions, yet at present the poor economic situation – together with the political difficulties faced – has undermined the straightforward path from school bench to a better life. When there is no work, the unfolding of the forthcoming can easily become experienced as stuckedness, defined by an existential immobility (Hage 2009b) that implies forced waiting, that life is put on hold rather than lived to its fullest. It is this centrality of employment for future-building that I turn to next.

7.2 Finding work: a basis for a good life

> I do believe in the impact of work itself instead of the impact of social development and social work because they learn, and they earn at the same time. They learn, and they don't have to [worry where to get an income], like at the end of the day they end up using the knowledge they have acquired during the day instead of just learning. They end up using the knowledge they gain during the day and at the same time they still have an income.

This was how Karim explained to me the importance of the project he was working for, employing women from Gaza camp to produce high-quality embroidery to be sold online and in high-end boutiques in Europe and different parts of the Middle East. He had just presented the project to a panel in a competition providing funding for social initiatives. A wide array of socially driven entrepreneurs from across the Middle East took part in the competition and, though in the end the embroidery

project did not win, Karim was nevertheless proud of the impact they were making, creating employment opportunities for women in the camp community in which he himself had grown up. For him, and also for the project, it was important to provide the women with sources of income to live on, rather than making them rely on aid; unlike development projects that rarely continued in the long term due to insecure funding sources, the business model behind the project in Gaza camp, though not unaffected by uncontrollable factors, has so far been able to offer the women sustainable employment. Karim stressed the impact of their labor on the women by noting that "it is not simply a work they are doing, it is a life they are making"; it is a living they are making and, on a larger scale, it is a future they are enabling.

At first glance, work might not be an activity that is instinctively considered to be future oriented as it is so embedded in everyday life in its present. However, work also links to the future by structuring and enabling what is to come. If education is a formative step in future-building that opens doors and possibilities by creating the needed competences, it is indeed work, and especially wage labor, that enables the smooth unfolding of everyday life, and thus the encountering of the forthcoming in its mundane ordinariness. To see this, one has only to consider the opposite situation, unemployment, and how it can shrink horizons by making simply getting by a struggle. Furthermore, youth unemployment is often framed as risking the future of an entire generation[65], making evident the foundational position of employment.

Unemployment can easily create a reality that Ghassan Hage (2009b) describes with the term stuckedness: a form of existential immobility in which the sense that someone is "going somewhere" (Hage 2009b: 97) in their life has been thwarted. In societies where there are no official support systems in case of unemployment, having no work easily leads to this sense of life being put on hold, as no work means no income, and no income leads to a situation in which one is not able to fulfill what are considered one's obligations, nor explore life to its fullest. Without work one is deprived not only of the financial independence and income that is crucial for creating opportunities, both small and large scale, but also of a meaningful structure for the everyday. In the context of Palestinian refugee camps, employment was considered the opposite of idleness, which again was often described as a source of problems: young men without work loitering in the streets, spending their time in coffee shops, using drugs and causing problems both in their families and in the camp community in general. Hence, for my interlocutors the available employment opportunities were what in many ways dictated whether a good life was attainable.

If work was not available, they were forced to make decisions – even drastic ones – about how to change the situation.

Hence, initiatives such as the one Karim worked for are crucial in creating opportunities in the camps. Many thought that rather than precarious aid or projects, providing opportunities to work – by building factories or providing business and entrepreneurial opportunities – was what could really improve life in the camp communities. Though women's work is often considered to be less important – due to the gendered notion of breadwinner – the embroidery project nevertheless enabled the families to have at least a meager but consistent income. Similar projects can be found also in the other fields, for example Shatila Studio in Lebanon and Women in Hebron in the West Bank[66]. That it is specifically embroidery that has been transformed into income-generating initiatives across Lebanon, Jordan, and the West Bank is not a coincidence, but rather reflects the national significance of the practice. Palestinian embroidery has been appropriated as a political symbol and is thus highly valued as part of Palestinian heritage and tradition (Allenby 2002; Kawar 2011; Saca 2006). It is also emphatically a female practice and has thus provided a nationalistically oriented resource for women to earn an income for their families.

In the embroidery project in Jordan, Karim was determined to offer the women a structured working environment, improve their job satisfaction, and provide them with channels for good communication with their employer. The long-term nature of the project provided the women with a sustainable source of livelihood, and Karim was well aware of its importance to the camp community. Having grown up in Gaza camp himself, he had been surprised at the support women working for the project had slowly started to gain from their husbands, something he had not expected to witness in a camp with rather conservative gender roles. The project employed 400 women and they were allowed to work from home, which in part enabled them to take on the work in the first place as they did not have to worry about neglecting their families and the chores they were expected to do. In addition to taking care of the household, thanks to the project the women were able to bring in an income, which facilitated the flow of everyday life in the poorest of the Palestinian refugee camps in Jordan.

Negotiating one's way in working life

Having an employment is not, however, only about income, and Karim was a clear example of this. He repeatedly stressed how he wanted to feel he had something to

give through the work he was doing, so much so that it had become the determining criterion in whether he took jobs that were offered. Before starting in the embroidery project, he had been a freelance photographer and translator, which he had enjoyed because it had allowed him to decide which jobs to take on and how to schedule his work. Unlike Palestinian refugees in Lebanon, who were practically forced into this same situation due to the lack of more permanent employment, Karim preferred the freedom freelancing gave him. His first commission had been as an English translator, which he obtained after enrolling in a language course in Gaza camp. The teacher had recognized his competences and offered him the work. Since then, he had also learned photography, and still worked in both fields when he had time away from his work on the project. Before Karim was ready to decide whether he wanted to work for the embroidery project, he had wanted to familiarize himself with it to ensure that he felt he had something to contribute. When he realized that this was possible, he took the opportunity.

Others, however, were lucky if they managed to find a job in the first place, and what allowed some people the privilege of choosing while others had to struggle to find at least something, was the quality and quantity of opportunities available to them, which was usually connected to the *wasta* they had. As well as having the skills, Karim was lucky enough to have the contacts that could generate work for him. It had been a friend who had offered him the opportunity to work for the embroidery project and, when he secured freelance assignments, it was often through people he knew. As discussed in chapter 5, the importance of *wasta* cannot be underestimated, as it is often central to delivering opportunities in the employment market, and this is the reality in Jordan as well as in Lebanon and the West Bank. When employment opportunities are scarce, it is not even sufficient to have a contact; what is needed is a strong contact, a person one has such a strong connection to that there is an obligation for them to provide help. W*asta* does not have to be located on the government level or that of prominent institutions for it to be enabling and, even when it does not go to the extent of an employment opportunity being created specifically for the person needing a job, which also happens, it still helps by connecting a person to the possibilities that are available. Having those opportunities again makes it possible to plan ahead, and to be more demanding about the quality of the work, as it builds trust in the future, that in the end something will emerge that provides the basis for living.

Such connections and relations retained their relevance in enhancing satisfaction with and confidence in one's position even after a job had been secured, as a friend living in Rashidieh camp experienced. While sitting in a café on the southern

corniche of Tyre, she shared her frustration with the situation in her workplace. She was employed by a small organization in one of the camps in Tyre and, though in some ways she enjoyed her job, she nevertheless felt that she and a colleague were burdened with an unfair share of the work, while other employees spent less time at the center and, when there, did not seem to do much. When visiting her workplace, it was easy to detect the set of dynamics that existed between the employees and the managers, and how those who were not included in the employers' favorites, my friend among them, received different treatment than those with closer connections.

As the atmosphere in her workplace was wearing her down, my friend had hopes of finding other options. She felt she had more to offer than what she could deliver in her present job. She was even preparing her own proposal for a project that she wanted to set up in the camps of Tyre, a project that would create employment for her and a couple of friends. But as it was in the hands of the funders whether the project, and thus the new employment opportunity, would become a reality, my friend had no other choice but to continue in her present job. The situation in Lebanon did not generate a level of trust that would have allowed my friend to demand better treatment or to resign before securing a new position. As the future was perceived as worse and more precarious than the already erratic present, any position you had was something to hang on to, even if it was not what you had hoped for.

Though in Jordan the economic situation also meant that one was lucky to even find employment, with youth unemployment at almost 36 percent at the time of my fieldwork[67], from Karim's perspective it was possible to detect a level of trust in the future that allowed him to follow his own ambitions and visions for his working life, which was something I did not often encounter among my interlocutors. His attitude was reflected also in the surprise he had felt when he realized how frustrated people in Gaza camp were about work-related issues. Having grown up in a city till his early teens, he was shocked by how overwhelmed the Palestinians in the camp were by their status, believing there was nothing at their disposal because they were Palestinian refugees without a national identity number: "They have this kind of mental barriers on doing things because they expect to face a barrier [set] by the government".

I recognized the mentality Karim was referring to, having encountered it myself in all of my fields. The disappointment experienced when seeking employment, combined with the existing legal and political barriers, has created frustration, and reduced trust in the possibilities of being employed. In fact, according to the 2013 Fafo report (Tiltnes & Zhang 2013) on the economic conditions in Palestinian camps

in Jordan, one of the reasons for a person to be recorded as a discouraged worker, as someone who is not currently seeking employment, is that they have lost any hope of getting a job because of their previous experiences (Tiltnes & Zhang 2013: 215). Yet, among my interlocutors, the frustration stemmed not only from their Palestinian identity (though "because I'm a Palestinian" was also given as an explanation, especially in Lebanon) but more generally from the lack of possibilities and from a feeling of being trapped. Though Palestinian identity played its part in evoking these feelings, gender and the physical location also had their role.

It was clear that the more compromised the access to employment, the more difficult it was for my interlocutors to imagine their futures in the places in which they were currently living. Across my fields there are different sorts of legal and structural difficulty in the way of employment that increase the precarity of Palestinians' economic position. In the West Bank, Palestinians are subjected to a complex permit regime and a mechanism of surveillance installed by Israel that de facto prevent them from accessing all the employment opportunities that would otherwise be available. Not only has the occupation devastated the Palestinian economy in the West Bank by robbing Palestinians of their lands, controlling imports and exports, and flooding Palestinian markets with subsidized Israeli products (see Khalidi & Taghdisi-Rad 2009; UNCTAD 2018), employment is also hindered by the limited movement allowed for Palestinians both within the West Bank and from the West Bank across the Green Line to the Israeli labor markets.

However, the most comprehensive exclusion of Palestinians from the employment markets takes place in Lebanon, and this was experienced even by Asma, who as a Lebanese citizen should have been in a better position. In theory, the citizenship enabled her to work in professions not available to other Palestinians, to own property outside the camps, and to hold a Lebanese passport, which, though of limited value when it comes to visa-free mobility, is nevertheless better than the travel document that Palestinian refugees in Lebanon have. Yet, Asma still felt that her Palestinian identity took precedence over the legal protection and the possibilities the citizenship could provide:

> Officially, your papers are correct, you are a Lebanese citizen. But when you are interviewed by [the one who could employ you], from the way you talk he will know that you are not a real Lebanese citizen.

For Asma, the fact that she was recognized as a Palestinian despite her Lebanese citizenship meant that she could not count on being treated in the same way as those

with Lebanese family roots. In spite of holding a Lebanese passport, she was a Palestinian from a camp and she knew that she would be treated like one.

As I have discussed, in Jordan finding employment was more a matter of having the right *wasta* than of it being determined by one's status as a Palestinian, though, since Black September and the Jordanization policies that followed, Palestinians have also been overwhelmingly under-represented in the public sector due to the political sensitivities. Those without citizenship, including Karim and others with Gazan roots, have more limited opportunities as they are excluded from multiple positions. As non-citizens, those with a Gazan background cannot work in the government sector or be members of professional associations. To be employed in the private sector, Gazan refugees are obliged to apply for a work permit, which again limits their access to labor markets, as employers are discouraged from embarking on the bureaucracy required (Pérez 2011). At the time of my fieldwork, there was also a fear that Gazans in Jordan would face further restrictions as a result of the kingdom deciding to restrict teaching positions in private schools to nationals, and hundreds of Gazans did in fact lose their jobs[68] before the Ministry of Education clarified that the new regulation did not apply to holders of temporary Jordanian passports, meaning Palestinians of Gazan origin.

Despite the very concrete and often rather devastating obstacles that ex-Gazans face in Jordan, Karim's positive attitude was that if one is simply aware of the limitations, one can navigate through them. Hence, he reasoned that the mentality of the camp refugees was not an outcome of the existing legal barriers but that it had been affected by the constant presence of charities, convincing them that there were multiple barriers preventing them from being active members of society:

> They are spoiled by charities and by NGOs. You go to the camp, you find tons of charities who are making, who are kind of, how can I say it, who are brainwashing these people. They are keeping them depending on their aid. So, people ended up easily relying on aids and charities because they were told that they don't have the right to work, travel, or own a car, own a house, et cetera. And they, these charities are, how can I say, sucking their blood because you go to these NGOs and charities, you'll find them small bites of handouts and they are growing bigger. A charity started with one room, in few years you'll find a massive building for the charity, where did that come from? So, they are convincing the people of the camp that they do have the support to live and they don't have to go through, they don't have to suffer and go look for a job because they know it's a horrible experience to go through 'cause they are Palestinians and they don't have the right to do so. So, they say we have the alternative for you, we'll give you aid, we'll give you handouts.

Karim saw that because the charities were relying on the aid receivers for their flow of donations and funds, it was to their benefit to emphasize the barriers they would face, to keep them reliant on aid and to normalize it, rather than their exploring the different possibilities available to them in finding employment. Karim was fully aware that there were constraints that he and other Palestinians originating from Gaza faced, but for him they were something to be aware of, not something that would render all his ambitions and aspirations unachievable. His reference points were his father and grandfather, both of whom had always worked, and thus he could not comprehend the mentality he faced in the camp. Karim felt that his Palestinian friends in the cities were less tied by their Palestinian identity and, being from both the city and the camp, his own perspectives on his possibilities were closer to those of his peers in the former.

Uncertainty and shrinking opportunities

NGOs do, in fact, play a central role in the Palestinian refugee camps, but Jordan was the only place where I encountered a discussion on aid dependency that was clearly at variance with the widely shared understanding of UNRWA's services as a right. Elsewhere, in addition to their being evaluated according to the level of services they could provide, NGOs were considered specifically as opportunities for employment. The NGO-ization of Palestinian politics took place especially in the West Bank after the beginning of the Oslo process and the establishment of the Palestinian Authority (Allen 2013; Hammami 2000; Jad 2010), and it has not only transformed Palestinian resistance but also generated an abundance of related positions. Yet, as Palestinian NGOs generally rely on international funding that is notoriously precarious, so too can be the positions they provide. As NGO positions are usually project-based, the end of funding for a project leads to the termination of the related employment contracts. Striving to secure continuous funding has forced the NGOs to follow the trends dictated by outsiders, but even that and a proficiency in writing funding applications is not always enough. In Palestinian refugee camps in southern Lebanon, Palestinians could do little when the funding began to be directed toward the work being done with Syrian refugees rather than to Palestinian camps and gatherings. And when Palestinian organizations struggled to find funders, the employment positions within them were also jeopardized.

At the time of my fieldwork in Lebanon, the arrival of Syrian refugees had affected the possibilities available to 'local' Palestinians in many ways. The two

refugee communities had ended up competing for the limited resources, which had created tension on the ground. In addition to the loss of support when organizations that had previously worked with the Palestinian refugees from Lebanon redirected their resources to Syrian refugees, the latter were competing for the same jobs as the local Palestinians, usually at their expense. Small-scale entrepreneurship – usually within the camps – and different sorts of manual labor are important in providing work for Palestinians residing in Lebanon, who are excluded from the public sector and from syndicate-protected professions. For those living in the camps and gatherings of Tyre, agriculture and construction were the most important sectors, and these were also the sectors that often employed Syrians. Hence, a common cause for complaint during my fieldwork was how Syrians were now "taking their jobs". Yasser had been observing the changing situation in the camp from his position as a security officer: "It is a big problem in the community [of the camp]. The daily salary used to be around twelve dollars, and that was not enough for the worker. Now that a Syrian refugee takes less than that, what can he [a Palestinian worker] do? That has caused problems between the people". From Yasser's perspective, many problems in the camp, such as drug use, fights, and family conflict, could be blamed on the lack of employment that would keep people busy and secure them a decent standard of living.

As the scarce and precarious employment opportunities had only become scarcer and more precarious since the Syrian refugees had arrived to compete for the same positions, it was easy to place the blame on them. The scorn this had built up between the two refugee communities was experienced by the Syrian Palestinians living among the local Palestinian community, as they were blamed for stealing work and lowering the already rather low salaries. Marwa, whose family had fled from Damascus to Tyre where they settled in the camp in which they had relatives, had also managed to find work in the camp. Though she did not herself disclose on any occasion that she had been subjected to harassment because of her work, she and her siblings had nevertheless been the objects of verbal attacks in the public spaces of the camp because of their Syrian origin. In fact, the Syrian Palestinians I met in Lebanon were without exception shocked by the treatment they were subjected to by both the Lebanese and the Lebanese Palestinians. The shock extended to the general treatment of Palestinians in Lebanon, as they all stressed how in Syria there had been no difference between Syrians and Palestinians, how Palestinians had been treated as equals and had almost the same opportunities in building their career as the Syrians, even though they did not have Syrian citizenship.

As a report published by the non-profit organization Sharq.Org (Charles 2017) also stresses, the arrival of more than a million Syrian refugees in Lebanon has produced a drastic deterioration in the socioeconomic situation in the country and created competition for jobs, especially among young people without degrees. Because of restrictions Palestinians face in accessing the professional employment markets, unskilled labor on construction sites and in agriculture has provided a precarious and sporadic income, but an income nevertheless. Agriculture and construction had, in fact, till 2010 been the only sectors in which Palestinians could work without obtaining a work permit, but the amendments made to the labor law in that year changed this for the worse, even though they were introduced as enhancing the position of Palestinians in the labor market. As statements from the Palestinian Human Rights Organization's (PHRO 2010) reveal, the measures ended up placing Palestinians in an even more vulnerable position. They forced Palestinians to either go through the difficult and extremely uncertain process of applying for a work permit or to work clandestinely without one, leaving them vulnerable to employers' exploitation and government crackdowns.

The frustration that the precariousness of employment had created was intense in the camps, creating an undertone of hopelessness when it came to building a decent life in Lebanon. The future was described as black, as worse than the present, as something that would force people to leave the camps and even Lebanon because of the lack of possibilities. When, in 2019, Lebanon's labor ministry initiated a crackdown on unlicensed labor, Palestinians across the country took to the streets to protest their treatment in the Lebanese employment markets[69]. During my fieldwork, "*ma fii musta'bal houn*" (there is no future here) could be heard from the mouths of both young and old and, even when it was clearly not possible for everyone to try to radically change their situation, trusting that the future would, or even could, bring a positive change to the prevalent deficiency seemed more like wishful thinking than anything that could be counted on. To say that there is no future tells of a lack of expectations (see Bryant & Knight 2019: 55), that Lebanon has nothing to offer and that "all prospects and promises have been dashed" (Bryant & Knight 2019: 63).

Shrinking opportunities have also defined the job markets in occupied Palestine for years, increasingly so since the Second Intifada and the strengthening of the closure of both the West Bank and the Gaza Strip (see Tawil-Souri 2012). Closure, Israeli control of imports and exports, and the effects of land confiscations have crippled the economy within Palestinian areas and created soaring unemployment. Together with the IDs and the permit regime associated with them, closure has

limited Palestinians' possibilities of accessing employment within Israeli job markets, which had provided additional employment opportunities since the West Bank was occupied in 1967. Before the beginning of the Oslo process in the 1990s, Palestinians employed in Israel represented more than a third of the Palestinian workforce in the West Bank and the Gaza Strip, and brought important revenue to the occupied areas (Farsakh 2005), but since then the flow of the Palestinian workforce has been severely interrupted, forcing many to cross the Green Line clandestinely to earn a living.

Sami was one of those who had resorted to crossing over to the Israeli side without the required permits. He had walked across the mountains from Bethlehem to Jerusalem several times to work on construction sites. The first time he undertook the journey it took him more than seven hours to reach Jerusalem, but since then he had found shorter routes, with the trek taking less than an hour. It was nevertheless difficult and even dangerous for him to cross the Green Line. The first time he stayed in Jerusalem, he was there for two months after which he was caught by the Israeli police. Though he was released after a few hours, the police now had his information and fingerprints, meaning that if he was caught again he might end up in prison. To earn a living, he nevertheless continued to take the risk. Being in his twenties and unmarried meant that he was able to do this, enduring the trip across the mountains and staying away for months at a time.

Those for whom the Israeli employment markets are not an option are forced to settle for the limited opportunities available in the occupied West Bank. Consequently, the economic deprivation that results from the Israeli policies has a major impact on the possibilities of imagining a future life in Palestine, and it is part of the objective of making life unbearable for Palestinians (see Joronen 2017a; Roy 2016), and forcing them to "voluntarily" emigrate from Palestine. Even those with strong political stances and personal commitment to the cause of the Palestinian refugees, and all it entails, acknowledged that especially for the youth it was difficult to continue life in Palestine, because "there is nothing for them here" with which to build their lives.

However, even those who had the possibility to seek work from within the Green Line, namely those with blue IDs that allowed them to venture through the checkpoint without having to go through the erratic permit processes, still faced discrimination and mistreatment in their workplaces. A friend from Kalandia told me how her neighbor, who was working as a chef in a hotel outside Jerusalem, faced harsh treatment inflicted by the hotel manager. Just the day before, the chef's daughter had broken down in tears when my friend asked about her family. Her

father had not been home for three days, because he could not travel the distance to work every morning, but the reason for her being upset was the things her father kept telling her about his working conditions. She had told my friend that, at lunchtime, the manager locked the Palestinian staff in until the Israeli employers had eaten, after which they were allowed to have the leftovers, which consisted only of salad. My friend was not entirely sure what to make of the things her neighbor had told her, yet she saw no reason for her to be saying something that was untrue. West Bank Palestinians working for Israeli employers do, in fact, face structural discrimination that exposes them to other forms of mistreatment. Employees such as Sami, working without permits, are among the most vulnerable, with employers able to exploit them because of their clandestine position.

Yet, those with valid permits are also in a precarious position due to the system in which work permits are granted. The permit is registered to a specific employer, meaning that if a Palestinian worker is fired or leaves their job they lose the permit to work within the Green Line altogether (see Kav LaOved 2018). To get a permit in the first place, and to keep it, Palestinians are forced to pay brokerage fees that can amount to between a quarter and a third of their monthly salary, despite the whole practice being illegal (Kav LaOved 2018: 19–20). Yet, as my friend explained, it was still beneficial for people from Kalandia to cross the checkpoint to work, even more so than for people from Ramallah, because they lived in a cheap area. However, to get employed, at least in the service sector, required proficiency in Hebrew, and willingness to withstand the mistreatment that was likely to ensue.

The lack of employment opportunities within the West Bank, and the higher salaries that Palestinians were able to earn from Israeli employers, meant that most had no other option than to take whatever opportunity became available to them, even if it meant facing humiliation and mistreatment. However, a future built on income generated from Israeli employers is insecure at best, due to the changing policies, and as most of my refugee interlocutors were not able even to get permits to visit Jerusalem, being employed by the Israelis was simply out of their reach.

Seeking the right to work: Palestinian emigration from Lebanon

I had spent the night at a friend's house in Rashidieh camp. We had sat on the roof in the evening, eating sweets, smoking *'argileh* and chatting, and now we were waiting for friends to arrive. At that point, we had already known each other for two months, and my friend seemed a little quieter than usual. After a moment of silence, she

suddenly asked me what I thought of the situation in the camp, not only the situation of her family but of life in the camp in general. I had heard so many stories of the difficulties people went through on a daily basis, and after another moment of silence I answered that it was difficult, with no rights and few possibilities to change the situation. She nodded and seemed rather defeated. She continued that she had tried to convince her father that they should sell their house and leave, to get out from Lebanon. She seemed sad when she told me that and, knowing the situation and the limited possibilities that many hoping to leave actually had to do so, I did not really know what to say to cheer her up.

Especially for Palestinians in Lebanon – for the reasons discussed above – emigration has become the preferred response to the problems faced in everyday life. Though by no means completely directly related to work, the chances of better employment were still the most often articulated motivation for emigration. In addition to making everyday life a financial struggle, the side effects of unemployment were often considered to be a reason for the problems that were seen to be damaging the entire fabric of the camp communities. Having to struggle on a daily basis to make ends meet and to tackle the feelings of inadequacy produced by spending the days idly with nothing meaningful to do, was seen as a source of deviant behavior and of the conflicts that at times erupted in direct clashes between people. Frustration could erupt in seemingly mundane situations. An extreme case was when in Rashidieh camp a man was shot dead due to a quarrel over how to proceed with repairing the streets of the camp, stalling the work for months as those involved negotiated how to redress what had happened. Though it is difficult to pinpoint the reasons for events like this one, they nevertheless materialized in the tense atmosphere that at times lingered in the camps. The lack of possibility to build a life and to live in dignity as a full member of society, through being excluded from rights that are easily taken for granted by those who have them, especially the legal right to work, was what made it difficult for Palestinians to continue to dwell in Lebanon.

In Lebanon, it was hence a feeling of entrapment that lingered over the camp communities. Crisis has definitely become the context (Vigh 2008) that in many ways determines the lives of Palestinian refugees in the country, and their possibilities to act to change the prevalent conditions have been reduced to close to nil. Yet, as Henrik Vigh (2008: 11) also stresses, this incapacity to make a change does not lead to indifference; rather, for Palestinians it has created the situation in which seeking a life outside Lebanon is seen as the most feasible route to a good life. As migrants, Palestinian refugees seek "a *place* from where they may begin anew, with some sense of a stable future" (Ahmad 1995: 16, italics in original).

While gathered on the covered balcony of my host family's house in Lebanon, it had become customary for women from the surrounding houses to review who had left Lebanon and who was planning to do so in the near future. After finishing their morning chores, the women chatted and joked while sipping their coffee but also discussed what news there was among their friends, families, and acquaintances and, more often than not, someone was either planning to leave or had already done so. This topic arose everywhere I went. I sat on people's porches drinking coffee while they chatted via WhatsApp with their sons who were waiting in Libya to cross the Mediterranean, or sometimes anxiously waiting for a reply after there was word that a ship smuggling people across the sea had sunk. On a bus, I heard Palestinian women sitting behind me discussing a person who was traveling, and in service-taxis I was asked what I was doing in Lebanon when I had the possibility to stay in Europe, which is where the driver himself would have preferred to be. In fact, the majority I talked with mentioned their desire to emigrate. They talked about traveling (*saafer*), and this was discussed by everyone regardless of age or gender. Even those who considered themselves too old to start anew somewhere else, were nevertheless considering possibilities to find routes for their children to emigrate from the country, Germany and Denmark being the most frequently mentioned destinations.

Of course, all those who engaged in the shared discourse of emigration were not in practice able to leave Lebanon, but it had become such a desirable way of improving one's situation that even those with insufficient financial means were talking about emigrating as a way to find a better life. People often inquired of a friend of mine, who was among the few lucky ones who had had the chance to go abroad due to his work, about prospective countries to emigrate to, to which he usually replied by citing the difficulties they would face in Europe. Usually, however, he was not able to convince people because they had already made up their mind, that even though it would be difficult they would at least like to be given the possibility to try.

Without exaggeration, every Palestinian family in Lebanon has at least one family member who has emigrated at some point, which has created kinship networks that span from Lebanon to the Gulf countries, Europe, and the Americas. These networks are relied on both in bringing in remittances to those who have stayed in Lebanon, and in facilitating routes for those who wish to undertake emigration later on. They are thus crucial in enabling futures also for those who stay in Lebanon; this is not a new trend but one that has existed for decades. Often, the remittances travel to Lebanon from the Gulf countries (Hanafi 2003), but not exclusively. While in the Gulf countries it is possible to earn good money[70], in Europe an income can be more

precarious. Maryam's husband had left for Germany more than 20 years previously, leaving her to take care of their four children in a gathering in Lebanon. Before her husband was able to reach Germany, he was incarcerated for seven months, which resulted in Maryam losing contact with him. After he was released and was finally able to reach Germany, things improved only slightly: as he was paperless, his earnings were unstable, dependent on the number of days he was able to work. Maryam recollected him sending maybe 100 euros, maybe 150, each month, but that the remittances were never enough for her to provide for the family. To pay the everyday expenses, to allow her children to continue their education, and basically to continue living, Maryam had to take a job in agriculture, spending her days laboring in the fields surrounding the gathering. After finishing her studies, Maryam's oldest daughter was able to help her out, and Maryam herself was able to find better employment as a cleaner at the Lebanese University, but the situation remained compromised, to which the bare concrete barrack in which the family lived testified. Though not being able to sponsor a decent standard of living for his family in Lebanon, Maryam's husband was able to provide a place for their youngest daughter to stay in Germany when she turned to the smugglers to help her travel to Europe.

Asma, for her part, had struggled with the question of emigrating. She herself did not have the desire to seek a life in Europe, and she stressed to me several times that she had no passion for European countries; rather, she loved Turkey, to the extent that she had even taught herself the language. It was, however, her parents who had suggested that she consider leaving:

> A: You know what, if I were to do that [emigrate], just for my sister [who is living in Germany] because I love her a lot, I have missed her so much. But I can't leave my father and mother alone, that would not be a good idea. I don't know what to do. But my mother told me that she would want me to travel. It's better for me and my future.
>
> T: So your parents don't think you could have a good future here?
>
> A: Yea, and that's the hard thing: to choose between your future and your mother and father.

Asma's reflections exemplify the often-complex negotiations my interlocutors had with both themselves and their families, which included the social expectations they experienced. These negotiations are usually gendered due to the different roles and thus the different expectations that society holds for males and females. In Lebanon, it is usually the young men (*shebaab*) who are encouraged and supported to emigrate to find employment, as they are expected to provide for their families. *Sabaya* (young

women) on the other hand, are more likely to run up against the conservative attitudes of the community, which can deny them opportunities that would otherwise be available to them. Not all families I met saw it as appropriate for their daughters to live abroad by themselves, and one girl even had to decline a scholarship in the UK because her family did not approve of her leaving on her own.

Asma, however, was in a rather different position, her parents being the ones encouraging her to leave. She already had several members of her extended family living in Germany, among them one of her sisters, which probably made it easier for her parents to propose that their youngest daughter consider doing the same. For Asma, if she eventually gave in to her mother's insistence and emigrated, she would do it through continuing her studies abroad with a student visa. It was out of the question to pay smugglers, as many Palestinians from Lebanon, including some of her relatives, had done, traveling via irregular routes.

Asma's cousin had emigrated irregularly, and had stayed in Europe for more than fifteen years without being able to return to visit his family in Lebanon. In the end, it was his family who traveled to him, as his mother and siblings emigrated there one by one. For Asma, not having the possibility to visit her family was a major reason for not wanting to end up paperless and without the possibility to return to Lebanon for a visit. To begin with, Asma had no hopes of emigrating, but she was desperate to visit her sister whom she had not seen since she had left Lebanon many years previously. Being a student without a monthly income, and without responsibilities that tied her to Lebanon in the eyes of the embassies, Asma had trouble getting a visa, and when her father and brother went to visit her sister she was unable to join them.

Palestinian emigration from Lebanon has often been analyzed by dividing it into three waves (Allan 2014; Doraï 2003), starting in the 1960s with labor-based emigration to the Gulf countries to respond to the needs of the booming oil industry. The camps then experienced extensive outward movement in the 1980s when the civil war, the Sabra and Shatila massacre, the Israeli invasions, and the War of the Camps drove Palestinians to seek a safer life in Europe, especially in Denmark, Sweden, and Germany (Allan 2014: 168). Since the war ended, the movement of Palestinians from Lebanon has been characterized by the figure of the "illegal refugee-migrant" (Doraï 2003: 24), as Palestinians have migrated via irregular routes to gain both asylum and better economic opportunities.

Mohamed Kamel Doraï (2003: 24–25) has recognized four main factors in the continuation of the desire to emigrate even after the end of the civil war in 1990, the first of these being the increased economic and political discrimination against

Palestinians. The Oslo Agreement further drove Palestinians to consider life in Europe, as it offered the refugees neither a solution nor a perspective for the future. The third and fourth factors are both related to the possibilities to earn a livelihood: Doraï (ibid.) notes that by 1993 the economic situation in Lebanon had worsened, while at the same time Palestinians were forced to compete with Syrian and Egyptian workers in the labor market. All these trends continue to affect Palestinians in Lebanon and in the last two decades they have become ever more pressing issues. As it has become increasingly hard to gain official access to Europe, many are forced to turn to smugglers, joining the numerous other nationalities on the dangerous journey across the Mediterranean.

To the three phases introduced above, I would be tempted to add what Asma called "the crowded emigration" that evolved especially during 2015, the year of my longest fieldwork period in Lebanon. Even before that, Palestinians had joined the hundreds of thousands of Syrians, Iraqis, and other nationalities in crossing the Mediterranean on their quest to build better lives in Europe. In fact, the magnitude of the Palestinian emigration was revealed in a census the Lebanese state published in December 2017, in which the number of Palestinians in the country was reckoned to be 174 422, a far cry from the little over 475 000 reported by UNRWA[71]. Palestinians have long been leaving this country that has little to offer them, but their possibilities of doing so have been reduced as the attitudes in Europe have grown harder and border practices stricter.

The year 2015 saw a drastic increase in the number of people of different nationalities reaching Europe through irregular routes, as thousands arrived on the shores of Greek islands, among them Palestinians from Lebanese camps. Unlike their Syrian travel companions, these Palestinians found it harder to convince the officials of their need for asylum, as both access and attitudes grew harder as the number of asylum seekers kept growing. In comparison to that of Syrians, it was easy to think of the Palestinian emigration from Lebanon as 'voluntary', in that it was, and still is, not motivated by war or a constant threat of physical violence. Yet, the presence of the different forms of structural violence that Palestinian refugees are subjected to and the deep-seated vulnerability this violence has created challenge this assumption of voluntariness. It is as Ghassan Hage (2009b: 98) has accentuated, that "[m]ore often than not, what is referred to as 'voluntary' migration then is either an inability or an unwillingness to endure and 'wait out' a crisis of existential mobility".

Given that the conditions in which Palestinians live in Lebanon have deteriorated rather than improved, and that at present many find it impossible to achieve the

basics of a good life, get married, and secure decent possibilities for their children, the idea of "waiting out" does not seem plausible for many. Waiting for things to get better in Lebanon seems so unrealistic that many are ready to pay a fortune to smugglers and take an extremely dangerous trip, which they know could be their last, as they are "looking for a space and life where they feel they are going somewhere as opposed to nowhere" (Hage 2009b: 98). The hope of at least improving the existential "going-ness", in a place where life would be "at least better than here" as I was repeatedly told, is what in practice forced Palestinians to go on the move, as they had little to no hope that the conditions would get better if they stayed in Lebanon.

"The crowded emigration" had, however, affected how reachable those places, where existential movement was deemed possible, were for Palestinian refugees. My interlocutors were keenly aware of this and it entered into the discussions on possible destinations. In addition to the Scandinavian countries of Sweden and Denmark, Germany had been a preferred European country for many Palestinians from Lebanon, but now, after following the news about the numbers of Middle Eastern asylum seekers arriving there, they had labeled it as one of the crowded places, and hence as one where it would be difficult to get asylum and find work. Nevertheless, due to the existing networks in the country, it had maintained its appeal. Thanks to the policy of maintaining open borders that Germany was practicing in 2015, Angela Merkel even earned the honorary title *hajjah*, which literally means a (female) person who has performed the pilgrimage to Mecca (*hajj*) but is also used as a respectful way of addressing the elderly in general. However, the sheer number of people seeking asylum in Germany made it a less appealing option for the majority of my interlocutors, and especially for those who could not bypass the asylum process via marriage ties or a student visa. In fact, "the crowded emigration" to the whole of Europe was felt not only by those taking irregular routes and relying on the asylum process for obtaining the possibility to stay, but increasingly also by those who wanted to follow the official procedures.

Getting appointments with embassies had become difficult and visa application processing took a substantial amount of time. Though the issuance of biometric passports to Palestinian refugees since the end of 2016[72] has made the movement of Palestinians from Lebanon slightly easier, there are still only a handful of countries that Palestinians holding a Lebanon-issued travel document can travel to without acquiring a visa beforehand. "It used to be easy to get visas, and cheap", complained a friend when we were discussing with his relatives their desire to leave Lebanon. All those emigrating as families made it clear that getting a visa was the only alternative

for them, that they would not be willing to use the boats and put their children's lives in danger out at sea. For many, turning to smugglers is the only option but, among the families I discussed it with, there was a clear consensus that it was not an option at all. This, however, meant that they were forced to go through the visa processes with an increasingly uncertain payoff. Even so, many placed their hopes in the possibility that their visa application might be successful, affording them a way to reach the country where they felt there were greater possibilities to build better lives for themselves and their children.

Whereas Karim gave a moral evaluation of how work was perceived by his fellow camp dwellers in Jordan, Asma made a similar statement but regarding the eligibilities of those hoping to emigrate from Lebanon. For her, it was the benefit that these Palestinians were able to bring to the recipient society in the form of work that in the end justified the emigration, and she divided Palestinian refugees into the competing groups of those who had the qualifications needed to be 'the good emigrant' and those who did not:

> Most of the people traveling now, they have no degrees, they are not educated. So, they travel to Germany in a nonorganized way [meaning irregular routes]. So, they stay in Germany, the government there know where they are from and they know there is suffering here. So, they stay there, and the government will be responsible of giving them money, safety. But the government would prefer the one that has a degree and who would benefit the country there. The government would encourage this. Because in Europe, most of them are old people, I've heard that most of them are old, there are not [that many young people]. Because of this, the government, Germany, would like very much to have people from different nationalities that would work and build up the economics of the government. But sure, they will refuse the one who will just sit in the house getting money. So my sister, her husband has a high degree in IT so maybe he will have a better chance in Germany, he will find a work, and also he will just benefit the government. If the government there didn't return the one who has nothing, what about the one who has a degree? Sure, they will welcome him because he is better from another person who is just sitting in the house and, you know. For this reason, they will travel to Germany.

The idea that the governments in Europe would be obliged to provide benefits and even housing certainly encouraged some to leave, and at times I heard complaints that the stories those who had emigrated told when they returned to Lebanon to visit family reinforced the at times unrealistic expectations that people had about life abroad. Expecting benefits was, however, something that people also felt the need to separate themselves from, as in the case of Asma, who stressed that the receiving

government would benefit from the emigration of her sister, and not only the other way around. Similarly, when a friend said that she hoped to get out of Lebanon and I commented that many seemed to want to do that, she felt the need to clarify that it was not the same for her. She did not count herself among those who wanted to leave Lebanon to get benefits, money, and easy employment. She stressed that she wanted to travel to meet people, to learn about them, and to see the world.

Naturally, not all migratory movement is linked to finding employment, but it is connected to a more comprehensive search for rights. Yet, the search for employment opportunities also arises from a more complex web of interrelated reasons for and consequences of unemployment than what is acknowledged in the populist discourses that have increasingly been adopted by other than right-wing populist parties in Europe. For Palestinian refugees, unemployment is one factor among others that prevents them from living in dignity. It prevents men from being able to support their families, which is considered their moral obligation. It prevents young men from establishing their own home, which is a normative precondition for their getting married and starting a family. It forces people to rely on others without knowing whether they will ever be able to return the favors, which again can create a sense of failure. It is thus clear that employment connects to the possibilities to live what is considered a good life, and when a decent job and thus a decent level of income have become unachievable in the place where one lives, emigration can seem the only option to achieve a dignified and full life in the future.

The majority of my interlocutors who expressed their desire to leave Lebanon had a job of some sort, but many of them were still underemployed, or working only every now and then, and struggled to pull together enough income to live a comfortable life without having to worry about making ends meet. In fact, those with no source of income whatsoever could hardly undertake emigration because of the funds it necessitated. Furthermore, both getting a visa and relying on smugglers required not only extensive amounts of money but also networks of support that could either facilitate the visa process by providing an official invitation to the destination country, which would considerably increase the likelihood of the visa being granted or, in the case of turning to smugglers, help with the cost. Those leaving needed all the money they could gather. When entire families traveled, they even sold their houses in the camps, which could generate problems if things did not turn out as hoped and they were forced to return to Lebanon.

Relying on the family network was necessary to make travel possible, and at times it could create schisms between family members, when they had little resources to begin with. This was experienced by Najib, whose son had emigrated from Lebanon

eight months previously. "All the time he needs money, I don't have money" Najib exhaled wearily, when we were sitting in the living room of his house, in one of the gatherings in Tyre. His son was stuck in Ukraine, waiting for the possibility to continue his journey to his intended destination of Germany. Najib had six children, four girls and two boys, and it was his older son who had decided to emigrate to Europe, to improve his situation, as Najib's oldest daughter Rima explained to me when she joined us. He was trying to reach Germany where his uncle was already living, but his trip had been stalled at the border between Ukraine and Hungary, which had been increasingly hard to cross since 2015. By the end of October, when I was sitting in the living room chatting with his family, he had been there for several months and was running out of money. To enable his son's emigration and to support him along the way, Najib had turned to his friends and family to get the money together but now he was at the end of his means. Just like many other young men from the camps and gatherings, Najib's son had emigrated because he could not find a good job in Lebanon. He had studied mechanics but had not been able to find employment after graduating. To earn at least a modest income, he had ended up painting houses for a living, but this was a seasonal job and in wintertime he was forced to sit at home doing nothing. With this work, he would have been unable to start a family and set up a home for them, or make a decent living for them to rely on. His sister Rima noted that though for him it would have been possible to continue like that, as he was still single with no family to support, he wanted to take his chances and maybe find better employment in Germany. Yet, the journey had not gone as planned, and instead of improving his situation he ended up relying on his family to make ends meet and continue his journey.

Najib's older son was not the only one in the family who had hopes of finding a better life through emigration. Rima too had made preparations for leaving Lebanon, but unlike her brother who had embarked on a clandestine journey across Europe, she and her husband were hoping for a less precarious option. They had applied for green cards to travel to the United States with their children and were still waiting for the answer from the US embassy. For her, the reasons for emigration were multiple. She wanted to provide better opportunities for her children, to live in safety in a more stable political situation but, just like her brother, she also wanted to have better opportunities herself in finding employment. She had graduated in English literature and had been working as an English teacher in UNRWA schools, yet her situation had deteriorated as she was now only doing substitutions whenever someone was sick or on maternity leave: "We have to work many jobs to continue living here, it is very expensive [in Lebanon]. Of course, in America it is the same

but maybe it's still better". The idea that despite all the difficulties emigration would entail life would still be better elsewhere was widely shared. Even when it meant living in a place with no family network, where the weather and the food would be worse than in Lebanon, and where one would basically have to build a life from scratch away from loved ones, its possible pros outweighed the cons when Palestinians were considering their chances of creating a basis for what could be considered a good life.

Though Palestinian refugees have also emigrated for work from Jordan and the West Bank, in Lebanon emigration emerged as the most prominent way to widen the horizon of possible projects. Knut Graw and Samuli Schielke's (2012: 8) words aptly describe the sentiments on the ground:

> [I]t has become very difficult to think about a better future without thinking about migration to a place where one can make the money needed to realize that better future.

Emigration was thus the "horizon of expectation and action" (Graw & Schielke 2012: 13) that could make a future possible. Emigration, however, could also be felt very tangibly by the Palestinian community that stayed in Lebanon. The emigration of others not only was experienced via the remittances and links that could facilitate further emigration and the expectations it created in others who hoped to follow, but it also affected the employment of those who stayed. Though it decreased competition for employment as there were fewer people searching for work, it also decreased the customer base of those offering services in the camps. Farid, for example, had lost a large section of his barbershop's customer base precisely because many of the young men who had previously used his services had emigrated from Lebanon. Though some believed that emigration could also make the life of those who stayed easier because there would be less competition in the employment markets, the reality was often the other way around, especially for those whose livelihoods depended on the customers they were able to attract.

Making ends meet

In Marka camp on the outskirts of Amman, I found myself sitting in the *mukhtar*'s office, sipping coffee and listening to the *mukhtar*, the official head, and others describing the problems they faced in the camp. A friend had offered to show me around the camp, and we met a young man there who took us through its narrow

streets to meet the *mukhtar*. A few other camp residents turned up during our discussion and the conversation spiraled in different directions, but it was unemployment that emerged as the most concrete topic, because of its consequences for the camp residents. The young man we had met had already complained to us in the street about how there was no work in the camp, that he was working outside, and that more employment opportunities were needed in order to combat unemployment. He gave as an example of its effects on the community the idle young men who ended up causing trouble because they had no work to go to, the same narrative I had already become familiar with in Lebanon.

During the discussion in the *mukhtar*'s office, I witnessed many of the negative qualities associated with camp dwellers that I had already heard the camp dwellers themselves mention being attributed to frustration caused by the lack of work, and thus the lack of a proper income. "When the young men go to the streets and see others having a nice car, a new phone, expensive clothes, they get frustrated and start fights", was how one man explained it. The impossibility of taking the position of a consumer might seem a rather simplistic explanation, yet the importance of consumerism for the Palestinian camp dwellers in Jordan has been acknowledged by anthropologist Luigi Achilli. He notes that "mass-produced and mass-mediated consumer goods […] have become a main aim of people's aspirations" (Achilli 2015: 79). Furthermore, consumption was not merely a means to an end, for example a condition that enabled young men to get married, but rather a path to a good life in and of itself (ibid.). The irony was that the conflict inflicted by the frustration of not being able to engage in such consumerist practices itself further reduced the possibilities to do so in the future: I was told that companies felt reluctant to hire men from the camp because they did not want to risk having someone who might end up in trouble with the police.

Though not being able to buy the latest iPhone or a fancy car does not fundamentally compromise the possibilities of living, it nevertheless affected the sense that a good life, the life my interlocutors wanted to live, was achievable. Similarly, as Ghassan Hage (2003a: 20) has stressed, the sense of entrapment that negates the societal hope, the feeling that there are possibilities in life, is not necessarily related to income level per se. From an objective standpoint, one can have enough to cover the basic costs of living but, if a good life is associated with the possibility to engage in certain types of consumerism, to have a standard of living that comes closer to that of the middle class than that of those who settle for the bare minimum, the feeling that one is not able to live life to its fullest can be related to the possibility to buy the latest branded items. Lisa Taraki and Rita Giacaman

have, in fact, noted that consumption is a key medium in elaborating social imaginaries (Taraki & Giacaman 2006: 41). The consumption of luxury goods was especially pronounced in Lebanon, and even though many among my interlocutors criticized how the Lebanese were too occupied by this consumerism and stressed that not even most of the Lebanese were able to live a good life in their expensive country, it nevertheless contributed to the idea of what a good life should look like. Thus, for a friend, getting a smartphone as a present created a sense of achievement that was not reducible to the enhanced qualities of the phone itself. Conversely, not being able to have items associated with a good quality life and, more importantly, not seeing that the future can provide a possibility that such items will become attainable, can lead to the sense of entrapment eroding societal hope described by Hage.

Making ends meet, also on a more fundamental level, is a struggle that many Palestinian refugees face on a daily basis. A rather concrete consequence of the high costs of living is that young adults have fewer children than their parents' generation. While my host family in Lebanon had five children, as did a family of the same generation I frequented in Dheisheh camp, among the younger adults one or two seemed to be the norm. Though smaller families are a worldwide trend that also reflects changes in lifestyles, it should be remembered that in the Palestinian context natality has been framed as part of the nationalist struggle, of the demographic battle between the Israeli Jews and the Palestinians (see Kanaaneh 2002: 60–63). Hence the conditions on the ground that force couples to consider the number of children they hope to have relate to this discourse of big families as well as to their possibilities to fulfil their obligations as parents. Often the ability to live a financially decent life and provide opportunities for one's children was not a question of having a job or not; rather, it was a question of both the quality and the quantity of the work one had. Jaber, among others, complained about the amount of work that was required to achieve a good situation in which someone could provide their family with the desired standard of living. As well as being a teacher in an UNRWA school in a camp in Bethlehem, Jaber had two part-time jobs, because without them he could not achieve the living standard he wanted to provide for his family. As a teacher, he tried to encourage his students to work hard so that they could achieve high positions and better standards of living, but he also had to acknowledge that the political and economic situation in the camp, and in the West Bank in general, affected the students' possibilities, just as they affected his. The high cost of living across the West Bank, Lebanon, and Jordan forced even those with employment to consider whether what they earned was in the end enough to cover all their expenses.

When I inquired of my interlocutors what it was they were currently lacking that would allow them to build good lives in the places in which they lived, and would allow them to think their futures in those places, the unanimous answer across my fields was projects that would create employment opportunities. In Lebanon, work opportunities were among the most common things my interlocutors talked about, wishing that more of them were available to Palestinians, that factories would be opened and projects initiated and, most importantly, that the legal barriers to employing Palestinians would be removed. The same desires were repeated in Jordan, where the hope was that factories would be willing to employ camp refugees, and thus provide incomes and keep the *shebaab* of the camps off the streets and out of trouble. In the West Bank, Nada was among those who stressed the urgency with which employment opportunities were needed, so that those people who had no other option but to continue living in the West Bank could to do so with dignity.

The frustration and anxiousness created by unemployment, and the drastic measures people were willing to take to change the situation, were affecting whole communities, especially in Lebanon. Un- and under-employment is and always has been a prevalent problem in Palestinian refugee camps, and it is the issue that most affects the future prospects of all Palestinians, especially the young adults. Some, Karim among them, have been able to create their own opportunities, but I still would not hesitate to claim that the vast majority were at the mercy of others creating the opportunities for them. This did not however mean that people did not have plans and initiatives for creating new work for themselves. Nevertheless, when there is no work, horizons are easily reduced, and futures become defined by the struggle of getting by in the everyday and the attempts to find a way out.

7.3   Marriage: living an adult life here, there, and elsewhere

One evening, on the roof of her family home, my friend mentioned that her brother had recently been quarreling with their mother. It was not the first time I had heard of them quarreling: they often exchanged words about his hanging out too late without informing his mother where he was. This time, however, the reason had been a girl he had introduced to his parents. The girl had been pleasant enough and their mother had in fact liked her, but what she did not like was the economic status of the girl's family. My friend had given up dating a boy she had met at university for the same reason: her mother had commented on the economic situation of his

family, saying that he would not be able to provide the type of life my friend was used to, one that would allow her to go shopping and out with friends as she pleased.

Though the reputation and status of the prospective spouse and, more importantly, those of his or her family, are important when making decisions about marriage, the concerns are often also practical, as was the case with my friend's mother. After all, marriage was not simply a question of finding someone with whom to spend the rest of one's life, but of the type of future it could facilitate. Samuli Schielke has, in fact, noted that marital arrangements are partly highly rational, as every plus and minus is taken into consideration, including money, class, status, and reputation (Schielke 2015: 94–95). Similarly, according to Penny Johnson, in the context of insecurity and domination that Palestinians occupy "understanding marriage practices as strategies by both men and women to ensure security, survival, and development in a highly insecure world is a fruitful avenue" (Johnson 2006: 71).

Hence, when marriages were negotiated in the refugee camps, there were multiple things to take into consideration. Could the spouse (usually the husband), or their family, afford a decent home with all the necessary appliances? Could they afford to pay for the children's education and possibly their university tuition fees? Did they have enough capital to maintain, or even enhance, the standard of living to which the other party (usually the wife) had become accustomed to in their family home? Could they provide an enhanced status in other ways? And, also a relevant concern, was the financial situation of the spouse's family such that the couple would most likely need to provide support for them? All these considerations were important when pondering the suitability of a spousal candidate.

Marriage for anyone is a future-building act as it is a statement that one is planning to share one's life and one's future with another person. In the cultural context of Palestinian refugees, it also reframes life as, after getting married, the couple are expected to move from their family homes into their own apartment, and in most cases to start having children shortly afterward. Getting married is a step toward an adult life, a way of "attaining moral adulthood" (Gren 2015: 15). But, as has been briefly mentioned, this step has become unavailable, or at least postponed, due to the prevalent economic conditions, with too few employment opportunities and too small salaries. As having a furnished apartment into which the newlyweds can move is usually considered the normative prerequisite for taking the step into a married life, not being able to afford to build or rent one reduces a man's possibility of finding a woman who, along with her family, is willing to accept the proposal. Many are thus forced to wait for their situation to allow marriage to take place, and this is the reality not only among Palestinians but in the wider Middle East (Dahlgren 2014;

Singerman 2007). According to Susanne Dahlgren, for young men in Yemen the economic insecurity created by unemployment means postponed marriage and emotional frustration (Dahlgren 2014: 143). For women, on the other hand, postponed marriage means that they continue to live with their childhood families much longer than their mothers' generation did, as it is not usually considered proper to live alone as a single woman. I did encounter exceptions to this, in women who had moved to live on their own in the camps, but this was not common.

Marriage could provide opportunities beyond the traditional ones of enabling parenthood and the family life associated with it. For women, it could mean an enhanced position in the host country, if they married someone with a better socioeconomic standing or, in the case of Lebanon, someone with Lebanese citizenship. For both men and women, it could provide a way to emigrate, if they married someone with a European or North American citizenship. Getting married to a suitable spouse could thus be life-changing, and it is these cases that I elaborate next.

Marriage as a ticket abroad

Najib: You're not married?

T: No, not married but I do have a person [whom I'm dating] and…

Najib: You have?

T: Yes

Najib: If you're not a wife, I have… with my son, he is very nice [laughing]. He's beautiful, my son. Also [his] brother, he's been in Ukraine, he is very beautiful also. If you need, I will send [them] with you [more laughing]

Exchanges like this became rather common during my fieldwork, especially in Lebanon. My marital status was inquired into during interviews, in taxis, via Facebook and WhatsApp by people I did not really know, and during everyday encounters in cafés, streets, and the homes I visited. Though at times it was part of the common social exchange in a culture in which one's family relations are an integral part of who one is, at times it was posed as a straightforward question about whether I would be willing to marry a Palestinian. Rather than consider these questions about my relationship status in relation to my character, I argue that they are better understood as a manifestation of something connected to battling the existential immobility faced by Palestinian refugees, especially those in Lebanon, by

creating possibilities to escape the crisis that defines Palestinian refugees' dwelling. As becomes clear in the lines quoted above, marrying 'an outsider' could be considered a ticket abroad, and thus to a better life. Using marriage to facilitate emigration is by no means unique to Palestinians but it is rather common among those living in places where the horizon of possibilities does not provide decent opportunities for building a desired life (for a review of research, see Brettell 2017). Palestinian refugees are thus part of this wider group of people whose possibilities for mobility are considerably enhanced by cross-border marriages.

However, before proceeding with this observation, the disclaimer needs to be made that marriage is in no way treated as a means to an end. My friends and interlocutors married local Palestinians, people with Lebanese or Jordanian citizenship, and internationals all out of affection, and for multiple other reasons that are by no means reducible to a personal benefit calculation. Rather, they got married because they met a person they liked, because they wanted to take that important step into adulthood, because they wanted to have children, because they themselves or their families saw that it was the proper thing for them to do at that point in their life, and so on. These different reasons are not exclusive – they could all be part of the considerations regarding marrying someone. Yet, in some cases marriage was considered specifically because it would create opportunities that would not be available otherwise, as with Najib's half-joking suggestion that I marry one of his sons to enable them to emigrate to Finland. In fact, emigration was one of the most common types of means-to-an-end benefits that marriage could create, and especially in Lebanon this was openly discussed by many, though in the West Bank I also heard someone saying that if he had no other way of staying in the United States, where he was traveling for a workshop, he would find someone to marry.

My observation on how marriage was used as a means of emigration is in line with that of Mohamed Kamel Doraï (2003), who back in early 2000 observed the same practice taking place in Lebanon. Like him, most of the marriages I witnessed were between Palestinians, those whose parents had emigrated previously when it was still relatively easy for Palestinians from Lebanon to settle in Europe, and those who lived in the camps and gatherings. After marrying in Lebanon, the couple could travel to start their married life in the country of emigration. As Doraï (2003) writes, it was especially common for young men to marry Palestinian women whose families had emigrated to Europe but who nevertheless wished their daughters to find a Muslim husband from their home camp or gathering in Lebanon. Fadi's brother was one of these, as he had married a distant relative whose family had lived in Germany all her life. When I met Fadi, he had also recently married a Palestinian born in

Germany, who he knew from her visits to Lebanon. His new wife had returned to Germany while Fadi stayed behind in Burj Shemali camp waiting for his papers to be completed, after which he could follow her to his new life.

Repeating a similar story, in one of the gatherings on the outskirts of Tyre, Layla found a reason to complain about the local men's preference for those with a European citizenship. She noted with disapproval how it had become harder for the local women, her daughter included, to find a proper person to marry because so many young men had left for Europe or preferred to find someone with a citizenship that would enable them to do so:

> There are no *shebaab* [young men] coming to marry here, but there are girls there [in Europe] who come here to marry the *shebaab* from here. It is the opposite [from before]. The *shebaab* rather marry there [while in Europe] than come here, so that they can get the citizenship. If there is one woman with a citizenship who wants to marry, fifty families will come [to introduce their sons].

Layla continued that even those who were not beautiful, who were crazy (*majnoun*), could get married because of their citizenship status, while beautiful women from the camps and gatherings were not able to find a good husband. Layla's complaint was of course an exaggeration, as people do naturally continue to get married in the camps and gatherings in Lebanon, yet it does derive from actual practices aimed at overcoming statelessness. Marriage was the easiest way to gain a citizenship that would negate the rightlessness produced by statelessness in a world of nation-states: for Palestinians in Lebanon it was a way to become a member of an entity that would have the responsibility to protect and support them, in other words, it would allow them to gain access to social rights reserved for those with a state of their own.

Usually marriage facilitated the use of official travel routes, but sometimes it also encouraged a person to choose the unofficial option. Maryam's daughter had done this when, tired of waiting, she had turned to smugglers in order to reach Germany, where her father and future husband were living. This case was special because it was a lone woman who had undertaken the journey, which was by no means common because it was not seen as proper. Travelling with smugglers and unknown men was considered to be more dangerous for women. That it was usually men who traveled with smugglers was connected not only to gendered ideas of what was proper and allowed but also to social expectations when it came to marriage and providing for a family. In addition, in the case of marriages it was more common for men than women to marry "an outsider", whether with a Palestinian background or not. In a socioeconomic situation in which it had become increasingly difficult to

fulfil the societal role, marrying someone from "outside" gave people the possibility to bypass some of the expectations: marrying someone from abroad meant not having to have a house and a stable income because life would be lived in Europe or North America, not in the Middle East. Even when trying to meet the societal expectations, timing could be everything. When I first visited Shatila in 2012, I met Yusef for whom the establishing of a new household had not been completed soon enough, as the woman he had hoped to marry had found a way to emigrate from Lebanon before the new apartment was ready to move into. Yusef had been building a new floor on his family home to have as his own apartment, but because scarce resources had dictated the pace of the construction work, he had missed his chance.

Among my interlocutors, marriage was one way to overcome the existential stuckedness as it very tangibly provided the possibility to "go somewhere" (Hage 2009b: 97), in both a spatial and a metaphorical sense. Marrying to facilitate emigration was most pronounced in Lebanon, where statelessness significantly reduced the possibilities to enjoy basic rights and hence also access to official routes out. Yet also in the West Bank, the possibilities to build a future were dim, and people sought different ways to live a normal life in spaces not defined by the occupation. But, unlike in Lebanon, where such marriages usually involved Palestinians with a European citizenship, in the West Bank all those I know who have emigrated via marriage are in relationships with non-Palestinian European women who had come to the West Bank, or whom they had met while studying abroad. This is most likely linked to the differences in the legal and political realities, but also to the origin of Palestinians in Europe, among whom Palestinian refugees from Lebanon are well-represented (Arar 2006: 44–45). In Jordan, on the other hand, Palestinian refugees did not express a similar urgency to find ways out, due to their naturalized status as Jordanian citizens. Tellingly, the only case I encountered there in which marriage provided a way to emigrate involved a Palestinian refugee of Gazan origin, who thus did not have such a status.

To marry or not to marry?

"I think I have ideas, not [the same] like [other people in] the camp. I want to study, work, and live before getting married", Amal stated when I was visiting her in her family home. I had spent the night at her house, and we were sitting on the floor chatting after finishing our breakfast. Her family home was located on the border of Gaza camp. Situated on the outskirts of the small town of Jerash, the camp was

typically considered rather conservative and, as Amal explained to me, most females in the camp got married young, before they turned twenty. Her being 26 at the time, Amal was thus an anomaly among her friends in the camp, unmarried and not very responsive to people's suggestions that she should find a husband. For her, getting married represented the end of the limited freedom she had as a single woman, because afterward she would have her husband to answer to. It would have further meant that she would soon after have to take on the role of mother, which she was not ready to do:

> The girls [in the camp] get married after school. […] I don't like children and people in Gaza camp, now they are always looking at me, like, you are 26 and not married? This is like you're eighty and not married. My friend, she is my age, and she has, like, five children now. Most of them [girls in the camp] marry at eighteen or nineteen.

Amal felt pressure to live up to the expectations of the community, especially because her mother's work brought many women to their house and they always pestered her with their questions about her relationship status. She had persisted with her stand on when and to whom she would get married, but she confessed that she had started to feel like giving up. Still, the fact that she did not want the things from life that were expected of her by the community affected her perception of the possibility of having a future she would call a happy one:

> You know, I don't think like others. But if you have interviewed someone from my age, it will be completely different. She will say that she's happy, she's married since, like, five years, and she has kids, and all that she wants is to raise them and to help her husband with work, maybe she sews, maybe. But for me, I don't want this life.

Amal was forced to negotiate her own hopes in relation to the expectations of the community in which she lived, and at times this meant abandoning the things she wanted from life in order to fit into the rather restricted subjectivity allocated to her as a woman in her late twenties. She wanted to work, but it was difficult to do so because as a woman she could not live alone in Amman, where it would have been possible to find employment, nor could she travel there every day due to the expense and the understanding of what the proper times were for a woman to travel alone. She had wanted to stay in the Gulf, but was unable to do so when her brother, with whom she was living, decided to return to Jordan. She wanted to emigrate but could not do so because she did not meet the requirements for asylum and was unable to get a visa due to her family's financial situation. Ironically, her hope had become to

find a man outside the camp, even though she had previously insisted that she did not want that life. Marrying someone from the camp was not an option for her, because then she would be stuck there, but a man from outside could facilitate her way out from the camp, and even provide her with a citizenship, and thus the rights it would entail.

For my female interlocutors, marriage could be a way to get what they aspired to, but it could also be the opposite, when their personal aspirations were not easily accommodated within married life. Both Amal and her younger sister associated marriage with a loss of freedom to do what they wanted. They felt that their way of thinking was not the same as that of others in the camp, and for them marriage became an option only when it could enable things they wanted in life. Amal's sister Amina told the story of a woman she knew who had been smuggled to Gaza to get married there, and she herself had entertained the idea of marrying a Jerusalemite in order to get the possibility to live there[73]. Neither Amal nor Amina saw marriage as something they wanted in its own right. Yet, in practice, they had to negotiate their way in the community in which they lived. Their situation also reflects the gendered horizons of expectations. The culturally shared expectation is that women in the Palestinian camps, and in the Middle East more broadly, do get married, and sooner rather than later. Though many do continue participating in working life, their societal status changes – perhaps even elevating, as they fulfil the role expected of them – when they become married women, and especially when they become mothers[74]. This being the societally expected trajectory for women (see Johnson 2010; Sa'ar 2004) means that even those who do not abide by it, and are fully supported by their families in seeking other things in life, nevertheless encounter it in their community, in one way or another, as Amal had through the questions asked by her mother's friends.

Marriage is an important step in an individual's trajectory, and for my interlocutors it was a site that involved complex negotiations about what type of future it could facilitate. For those without a citizenship, marriage could provide an 'easy way out', but for those who married in their host societies it also changed their societal status. Furthermore, who one ended up with was not always straightforward. For Palestinian women marrying Lebanese men, their very Palestinian-ness could create obstacles that made it impossible for them to be with the person they wanted, and in fact a close interlocutor confessed that, *l-hamdillah* (thanks to God), in her Lebanese husband's extended family only one person was opposed to his marrying a Palestinian. Socioeconomic standing affected not only the possibilities of getting married in general, as the unstable economic situation could postpone marriage

altogether, but also the choice of spouse, when families were against their children marrying "below them". The different family cultures also played their role, in other words how conservative or traditional the family happened to be. But in all cases, getting married was an important step to take, a way of reaching full adulthood and a future framed by family life.

Interlude: the idea of Europe

One cold Friday afternoon in late December, I was visiting a social center in one of Tyre's refugee camps. It was quiet and, together with a few of the employees, I was gathered around an electric heater to keep warm. Just as many times before, the discussion turned to traveling, which for Palestinian refugees in Lebanon indicated more than a simple holiday abroad. People around me reviewed the best countries to try one's luck in, and at times turned to me to ask my opinion on the matter. This time, however, the discussion was more than just an expression of some distant, still unattained aspiration: one of the employees sitting among us was leaving Lebanon in a few days' time with his wife and young daughter. They had managed to get a visa to Russia, but they were still in the process of figuring out where to continue on to from there. As always when my interlocutors asked me what I thought would be the most realistic and sensible country to seek asylum in, I felt anxious under the responsibly to provide as accurate information as I could, knowing that it would end up being difficult no matter where they traveled, while simultaneously acknowledging the very justified reasons people had to try to build a life outside Lebanon. This time the pressure was amplified by the fact that Finland was one of the options on the table: the family had no intention of staying in Russia and the most obvious direction to go from there was toward Finland and Norway.

The people around me reviewed what they had gathered from various sources, and concluded that the Baltic countries – Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania – were not a good option because they had heard that refugees were not treated well there. The Nordic countries, on the other hand, had the reputation of respecting human rights, in addition to which they were considered a more feasible option than countries such as Germany, where there were a lot more people arriving and where the chances of getting asylum were thus considered to be slimmer. The discussion did not lead to a final decision, at least not one that would have been openly articulated. We halted the discussion and had a joint farewell cake, as I was also approaching the end of my time in the field, and the employees bid emotional farewells to their colleague.

Though it has been implicitly discussed throughout this chapter, here I want to pause to highlight how, for my interlocutors, Europe as a destination of migratory movement did not simply constitute a spatial change in their lived environment; for them, emigration was also viewed from a moral perspective. Though my interlocutors often rationalized emigration by describing the lack of employment, the quality of education, the poverty, or other rather concrete reasons, it also offered them the promise to change how they were encountered as human beings. Hence, it reflected how they thought a human being should be encountered in order for them to live a dignified life. In Lebanon, where Palestinians are systematically discriminated against and blamed for the misfortunes the country has faced, Asma recognized how this hope for respect and decent treatment made people to want to emigrate:

> Look, there are many reasons [to emigrate]. *Ma fii shoghol*, there is no work, *o ma fii*, there is no health, no safety, also […] they don't respect you. Even the Lebanese people, not the Palestinian one […] you know, most people when you ask them on why they want to travel, they tell you: for money. But you know, if you look inside them, the most important fact [is that] there is no value on their humanity, no respect. This is the more painful point.

Many were aware that how refugees were treated in Europe was by no means unproblematic. Yet it was clear that the moral statements stemmed more from the lack of rights and possibilities that Palestinian refugees experienced under their host sovereigns than from the actual treatment and opportunities they would encounter in Europe.

Not everyone shared this view, however; one interlocutor in particular was extremely critical of the aspirations of those hoping to travel to Europe and he expressed this rather openly to them. Unlike with the political leaders I had met, his reasons for challenging those wishing to emigrate had nothing to do with the Palestinian national struggle – the discourse of return, of the importance of refugees remaining in the camps until they were allowed back to Palestine. Rather, he was fed up with the idealized views people had of life in Europe, when he had himself witnessed the sort of difficulties that would await them if they reached countries such as Germany and Denmark. I had heard him commenting sarcastically on the expectations people had about life in Europe, of the benefits they would receive and the employment opportunities they would find. Though at times he was challenged on his comments by those we were having the discussion with – that they knew full well that reaching Europe was not the same as reaching paradise and that they were aware of the difficulties along the way but that life would nevertheless be better than

in Lebanon, that they would have their rights as human beings – he himself was convinced that Europe would not be able to provide the good life to which people aspired. In reality, though many had a rather vague idea of how life would be once they reached Europe, of what they would be doing and where they would be living, their idea of life there was characterized by the values they thought Europe embodied.

"In Europe they respect human rights", was thus the reasoning for seeking a life there. It was the antithesis of life in Lebanon, where they did not respect you because you were a Palestinian. Many repeated how Palestinians had been in the country for more than 70 years yet still had nothing – no rights, no work, no future. If they continued to live in Lebanon, the future would bring only more problems. Europe, on the other hand, was where the possibilities were. Even if it would be hard there as well, living without the support of family and community, in a place where everything was unfamiliar, at least they would have the possibility to try, unlike in Lebanon, where all the doors were closed.

From the West Bank perspective as well, life outside Palestine would allow you to feel like a human being: you did not have to carry your ID everywhere you went, be afraid of the soldiers, prepare to be humiliated at the checkpoints, or struggle to reach your full potential. Outside Palestine, you could move around freely, without having to fear for your life. You could go to the sea was a simple example often used by Palestinians to describe the restrictions on their lives in the West Bank: "The sea is just there but we are unable to reach it". They also commented, "Jerusalem is just there, a few kilometers away, but we are not even allowed to go and pray in al-Aqsa". Hence, life in Europe came to mean life with rights, life with possibilities, life without fear, a wider horizon. Europe would enable a life with a better future, a life that was unattainable in the camps.

8   Politics of the future: integrating the national and the personal

> I look around me and see Palestinians in every corner of the world, and I ask myself: Are we a people? What do we have in common? Beginning in 1948, our experiences have taken many different roads and to say that our identity can be founded upon our memory is a weak argument. I believe instead that which is truly capable of holding us together are our hopes for the future and our common ambitions. (Ala Hlehel, in Hilal & Petti 2018: 87)

The future(s) discussed so far have emerged as embedded in the everyday, as practices that are involved in building the basis for the lives my interlocutors aspire to live as individuals in the context framed by their position as Palestinian refugees. The future is approached practically, by considering the possibilities that are available, and by using whatever resources there are in actualizing those possibilities. Future is, however, also the tense of the political. This is in the sense that political actions aim to change conditions, to build a future that is seen as the desired one from the perspective of a specific political movement or ideology, for the nation, an identity group, a social community, or the whole of humanity. As with planning, politics can thus be described as an "inherently optimistic and future-oriented" practice (Abram & Weszkalnys 2011: 3) as it imagines a better world: even when the realpolitik can be about minimizing damage and finding a solution that is 'good enough', the ideological principles behind political engagement aim to build a society that, from the perspective of the supporters, is the best possible one.

In this chapter, I will turn to what I have termed the politics of the future. By this I mean the political imagery on the future that has become part of Palestinians' national consciousness to the extent that it partially determines the acceptable ways of discussing it. It includes ideas about the right of return, Palestine, and steadfastness (*sumud*), and about how an individual refugee should relate to the national struggle. For Palestinian refugees, a future framed by the shared nation-political project is that built on the return to Palestine. The refugees' role is to fight toward that aim, if not otherwise then at least by waiting out the refugeeness, to see it to the end in the host states. As this forms the nation-political frame through which the future is viewed and described, it also becomes part of the attempts to negotiate

the individual paths to the future that aim to tackle the problems of the everyday, even when there is a disparity, if not a discrepancy, between the two imaginaries. These negotiations emerge especially when addressing outsiders but they are also part of the internal discussion within the refugee community.

The politics of the future thus brings forth the often-conflicting relation between everyday conditions, and the hopes they produce, and the political discourses on the national future. This discrepancy emerges even when the national objectives are deemed insufficient in responding to the needs of the refugees, as they often are in a deteriorating political and economic situation. The sense of stuckedness and stagnation demands actions with an urgency that the political cannot offer. Yet, the political aims prevail as the national view of the future that is incorporated in different ways into the individual, more practically approached futures. The national forms its own temporal frame, one that creates a connection from the pre-exile past to the return, whereas the temporality of the personal draws on the experiences of exile and directs toward those spaces where personal aspirations could be achieved. These temporal layers exist simultaneously but function on different levels and respond to different needs. In this section, I turn to these futures that are delineated in the political claims of the Palestinian refugees, by considering how my interlocutors incorporate them into their personal aspirations, how they negotiate their meanings and, in some cases, how they bring them into practice in their own way.

8.1   National futures

> Our struggle, as we have proved, has not been merely to live in comfort, to pursue happiness, to acquire purpose, to create, to sing, to make love; it has not been merely to enrich our culture, to contribute to civilization, to leave our imprint on history. But it has been a struggle for the right to do it in Palestine. (Turki 1972: 146)

A crowd had started to gather on the street by the Ibdaa Center, on the border of Dheisheh camp. It was May 15, the annual Nakba commemoration day, and a demonstration march was about to set off. The camp residents had already started to commemorate Nakba the previous evening, when speeches and music filled the air and Palestinian flags were waved on the same spot outside the Ibdaa Center. Now, on the actual commemoration day, youths wearing black t-shirts with the

picture from the Nakba-day poster on the front and a red "1948" on the back circled around the train of return, a wheeled structure built specifically for the event.

Figure 8 The train of return

Descending from my apartment located on the steep slopes of the camp, I joined the crowd and looked for familiar faces. After a while I spotted Nassim and a group of his friends, and made my way toward them as the march started to slowly move northward on the Hebron road, the main route passing the camp that used to connect Jerusalem to the southern city of Hebron/al-Khalil before it was blocked by the separation wall. Two days previously, on my return from Jerusalem via checkpoint 300, I had noticed how the lampposts on that same road had been covered in Nakba posters during the two days I had been away. The poster pictured a man wearing *kufiyah*, the traditional checked scarf, and holding a large key above his head, facing toward a map of Palestine that appeared in the middle of a bright halo, silhouettes of tall buildings recalling the present-day camp landscapes in the background. As we made our way in the opposite direction, I noticed different posters and banderols, those of a man with his face covered by *kufiyah*, holding a key in one hand and a slingshot in the other, stamping on the separation wall and

breaking it into pieces. When I inquired about them, a friend explained that this year there were two different posters, one produced by the PLO's refugee agency, which was associated with the PA, and the other by a network of refugee NGOs, the Global Palestinian Refugee Network, because there had been a disagreement between them regarding the messages they wanted to convey.

In the Palestinian national narrative, temporalities are closely associated with specific spatialities: past(s) is Palestine, present(s) is exile, and future(s) is, again, Palestine. Nakba Day is one of the political events in which this division is reproduced. The national evaluation of these spatiotemporalities is rather clear: past-Palestine is to be commemorated as the 'paradise lost', and the present exilic life of the refugee camp is to be endured, and then disregarded if the longed-for future-Palestine becomes available (see Farah 2009). Naturally, this trinity does not go uncontested, yet it is the discourse of which every Palestinian refugee is aware. The past and the future are the tenses that easily overpower that of the present. It is the history in Palestine before Nakba that is remembered, the traditions of which need to be preserved as markers of identity, and which is even idealized to such an extent that it bears no resemblance to the actual history. In Jordan, for example, I was told in good faith that Palestinians did not have guns at the time of Nakba, which left them in the unquestionable position of victims[75]. Their becoming refugees due to Nakba meant that many lost everything they had before, forcing them to rebuild their lives from scratch after the rupturing and traumatizing experiences of having to flee their homes. As Nakba has formed the narrative of loss and the reality of refugeeness has been one of deprivation and adversity, the life of the past is what has been longed for, and Palestine as a place represents where rights will be gained, and a good life made possible. Yet, because of this narrative emphasizing how life can be normalized only in Palestine, the future of return has in a sense taken precedence over the present of the exile. Though this discourse is important to the refugees' political project, it has also been exploited by the host sovereigns, who have justified their unwillingness to grant Palestinian refugees certain rights by noting that the refugees need to return to Palestine and hence must remain stateless while still in exile. This political narrative creates clear-cut temporal-spatial connections and, while this dissertation also narrates the temporalities in relation to different spatialities, the aim has been to untangle the one-dimensional coupling that might be seminal from a political perspective but does not correspond to the realities of more than 70 years of exile.

The single most important component of these political narratives on the Palestinian refugees is the right of return secured by United Nations Resolution 194. Palestinian writer Fawaz Turki (1977: 68) gets straight to the point when he writes:

> He [a Palestinian refugee, sic] cannot say, for example, that he does not believe in the Return. To reject the Return is to rip up the tree on which his history and *raison d'etre* grow. The Return is the rock on which our nation in exile is founded and the social homeostasis that had cemented our people together in their encapsulated world. The passion for the Return is an expression of our identity, an ecstatic embodiment of its inward movement and preoccupations. It is as if the ultimate Palestinian question were: I want to Return, therefore I am.

However, he also sees the ambivalence that tying Palestinian refugee subjectivity to the right of return creates:

> But the Return is a two-edged trip; it is both the cross we bear all our lives and the vision of ecstatic struggle with our limits as a nation without patrimony. To retreat from it – and this is the rub – is to rush headlong on a trip to madness – because there is more, in the metaphor of the Palestinian experience, to the Return than territorial restitution and refugee repatriation. After a quarter of a century in the ghourba [exile] and three quarters of a century of struggle, it is, pure and simple, Palestinian selfhood.

The future tense has been at the center of the Palestinian political discourse precisely at this spatiotemporal nexus that envisages the return to Palestine. In 1998, in an event marking the 50 years lapsed since 1948 and Nakba, the Palestinian national poet Mahmoud Darwish delineated these tenses of Palestinian national identity, repeating several key components of Palestinian refugee identity. In words neatly exemplifying the temporal dynamics of the Palestinian national narrative, Darwish addressed those present at the event:

> [P]ained at the continuing tragedy of our recent past, we cast our sights to the future that we are molding in hope and in the promise of freedom and justice. […] The Palestinian people have launched a redemptive journey to the future. From the ashes of our sorrow and loss, we are resurrecting a nation celebrating life and hope. […] The past has not entirely departed, nor has the future entirely arrived yet. The present is an open potential to struggle. […] For half a century Palestinian history became a living pledge to future generations for their right to a life of freedom and dignity on their own land. (Mahmoud Darwish, quoted in Benvenisti 2000: 308–309)

As is evident in the words of the authors quoted above, the grand national narrative on refugee future(s) is built around the return to Palestine. It forms the backbone of the "common aspirations" described by Ala Hlehel, in the quote at the beginning of this chapter, as the unifying qualities of Palestinian national identity. Fawaz Turki also suggests, in more explicit terms, that return has become an inseparable part of what it means to be a Palestinian refugee: to suffer from the ills of exile and to believe in the salvation of return. In this political narrative, the past lived in Palestine becomes the frame through which the future is viewed.

The idea of return is what has basically formed the present material and political configurations of the camps, as the temporariness is maintained in the ways described in section 5.1 to enforce the commitment to return. It also forms the narrative Palestinian refugees are expected to repeat to outsiders. As Nassim remarked to me several times, every time a Westerner comes with a video camera or a voice recorder, Palestinian refugees know what to say about their community, refugeeness, and the future. It is their obligation to enhance the political future based on the implementation of the right of return by narrating it to outsiders, even when they do not necessarily believe it will take place in a timeframe that would allow them to benefit from it, at least not in the form envisaged in national narratives.

The multiple meanings of return

The familiar tropes of the villages of origin and the willingness to leave behind everything built in exile are interwoven into personal narratives on injustices of the present and on the better life that will be achieved once the return becomes possible. The different registers in which the future is addressed can at times be confusing, when the same person who has, in an informal situation, talked about the desire to escape the life defined by occupation by emigrating repeats a completely different set of personal aspirations, with return and ancestral villages as their focus, when the discussion turns formal in the presence of a voice recorder. This happened, however, only in the West Bank, where everyday life is highly politicized by the constant presence of Israeli occupation. In Lebanon, the return, and Palestine in general, became part of personal narratives in different ways, as an option unavailable at present, and in Jordan addressing Palestine took yet another form as the country's official relations with Israel had politicized the situation in a different manner, to which I will return later in this chapter.

The narrative on right of return is naturally multivocal, with differences in how it is viewed and what is wanted from it. In the same multi-sited settings as me, Sophie Richter-Devroe (2013) has detected generational differences in how Palestinian refugees imagine the implementation of the return, with the Nakba generation longing for their homes in the villages, the generation of the revolution that grew up in the 1960s and 1970s adopting a legalistic rights-based approach, and the youth tending to be the most creative with the possible forms the return could take. In addition, Diana Allan (2014: 196) has noted that the younger generations' approach to return tends to be more symbolic, and to follow the same aspirational yearning I encountered in all of my fields: according to her, the return came to mean "the return of a dignity and humanity long denied them" (ibid.). A new way to approach the return has also emerged within civil society organizations, which have turned to consider the practicalities, asking questions such as how the return could be implemented, what form it could take, what it would mean in terms of community, spatiality, and politics, what it would mean to both Palestinians and Israelis, and what type of preparations it would necessitate[76]. Though I recognize the generational differences, I would also emphasize the relevance of the changing conditions, both political and socioeconomic, and how these affect refugees of different ages in different ways and thus create differences in what is yearned for from a national perspective.

Though these discussions have partially redefined what the return could mean, on the ground the ancestral villages continue to be central in the vocalization of the will to return across generations, as they have constituted the dominant discourse on the return. Hence, I met refugees who, when asked which village they originated from, immediately started to talk about the land they had in them. This discourse has also entailed the denouncement of the Palestinian state that would be created on areas occupied in the Six-Day War, as it would not allow the return to the locales lost in 1948 to be implemented. Yet, Munir, who had worked among the refugees in the West Bank on projects discussing the return, had his own view, which derived its meanings more from the limitations faced in the present than from the past lived in the villages:

> M: Our mentality is always that the return is to the villages, single private properties, right? And of course, such a thing doesn't come out of the blue, you know like, the sort of definition, imagination of the return. Because, speaking of my generation, which is the third generation, the fourth, in the camp, talking about returning to a single property is, doesn't really make sense. Especially when you see the sort of life we are living in the camp, right? Because, I'm not trying to underestimate the importance of private property,

of course, but also trying to say that we shouldn't live in the dreams of our grandparents. So return, from this perspective, for my generation, can take totally different dimensions. One would argue that, you know, returning to the common, what we refer to, for example, the Mediterranean. You come from the Mediterranean, but you know nothing about the Mediterranean, it's like a missing identity. Return, in fact, could be the freedom of movement. It wouldn't surprise me if people decide to stay in the camp, to live in the camp, but demand to have the freedom of movement.

T: Like, to have the rights that are now denied?

M: Exactly, to enjoy your time on the beach, or even, like, to live in the city. Why don't you have the right to live in the city? Why does it have to be to the village, a place that you know nothing about, you know, the sort of life that exists there. You know, none of us are farmers, anyway. Personally, I'm not sure if I can do it. Plus, why to start from a zero? Why are we willing to start from the zero? It's very important culture that has been produced in the camps, the culture of exile, you know, in 68 years. Why are we willing to give it up? Often, when you speak to my generation, they tell you, yeah of course when the return takes place, we will just demolish our houses. I see this as a very violent act, another Nakba in fact. You know, demolishing those places. Because these places are very important.

The way in which Munir discussed the return echoed the words of James Risser (2012: 329) on the ambivalence of returning home once one knew, that

> [h]omecoming could not be […] a return to where one has been, but would be nothing less than an arrival at that other beginning that, as a beginning, would constitute a departure.

To return implies abandoning the life built in exile and, while on the level of political discourse such an approach might seem reasonable, on a practical level the issue was much more complicated. Munir, for example, challenged all the central tropes of the national narrative on return: village, peasants' (*fallahin)* lifestyle, and disregarding the camps (Farah 2009; Swedenburg 1990). He rejected the tendency to discuss the return using the language of the past and instead wanted to acknowledge the impossibility, and undesirability, of such an approach. Why ignore the life built in exile? It was the only life most refugees had ever known, and the life they were also investing in through their everyday practices, from which they were determined to continue moving forward, so why ignore it on the level of political discourse? Rather, Munir considered the return from the premise of the present, from the conditions

that currently define the lives of the refugees and to which the return in some form could bring an improvement.

Nassim also rejected the imposed return, opting for having the freedom to choose for himself:

> For the elders, they want to be back [in the villages] because they have the image in their minds what is there, but for us [the younger generations], we don't have [that]. We want our right of return. From my perspective, how I define it, it is that I want Palestine to be free, I will choose to stay here or go back. But the right of return means free Palestine and that's it.

Munir was thus not alone in questioning the discussion of the return in ways that are in stark contrast to the life refugees are living on a daily basis, and in defining the return through the failings of the present rather than through the conditions of the past. The number of refugees who have first-hand memories of Palestine is diminishing and, for the others, the problems of everyday life direct their attention in different directions than that of the villages of origin.

Munir and Nassim's views on return had been formulated through active engagement with the civil society field and through the projects discussing the return that have proliferated in Israel/Palestine. Yet, albeit in less politically polished language, the return came to mean much the same as in the discussion I had in Lebanon: "In Palestine you can do everything and build a good life" was how Fadi phrased it, while simultaneously discussing his plans to emigrate to Germany. Return to Palestine came to mean having the rights that were denied in Lebanon: the right to work, the right to own, the right to travel. For my interlocutors in Lebanon this seemed almost self-evident: of course their basic rights would be secured in Palestine, because it would be their own country, they would be its citizens, and as citizens they would be protected. In Palestine, the state would have the responsibility "to care for them" (Hage 2003a: 26–27), like no state had in their lifetime. It was, however, also self-evident that return to Palestine was central only on the level of discourse, as an important and undeniable right that was still, in practice, unachievable. Actual solutions to the unbearable situation needed to be searched for elsewhere, for example in Germany, as in Fadi's case. In Jordan, on the other hand, where the great majority of the refugees did have basic rights, negotiations on the return involved complex considerations of what it meant to be a Palestinian with Jordanian citizenship, whether one could belong to both places at the same time, and whether Palestinians were unreasonable to hang on to Palestine and thus not be ready to fully integrate with the Jordanian public on the level of political identity.

The divergent views of the PA and Palestinian civil society organizations that emerged in the debates over the 2016 Nakba Day events in the West Bank were nothing new. Trust in the authority's ability, or even motivation, to stand up for Palestinians' rights has all but evaporated during the quarter century since the signing of the Oslo Agreements[77] and thus organizations advocating for the refugees' rights have taken the initiative in (re)defining the meanings of Nakba, of the return, and of the refugees' futures. A couple of weeks before the 2016 Nakba Day, a launch event for the Nakba commemorations was held in the Mahmoud Darwish Museum near Ramallah, and two busloads of active members from different organizations based in Bethlehem's camps made their way northward to the administrative center of the West Bank. Located on top of a hill, a short distance from Ramallah's city center, the Mahmoud Darwish Museum was established in commemoration of Palestine's national poet who died in 2008 in the United States and is buried in the museum ground. The museum was filled with refugees listening to representatives of different organizations giving speeches about the approaching Nakba Day.

On our way back to Dheisheh, I sat beside Nassim, whom I had briefly met before, and chatted about the event. Being his familiar critical self, he reviewed the event's content. For him, it had been a little boring, consisting mainly of political jargon on the right of return. Nevertheless, he was happy that for the first time the network of civil society organizations had chosen to approach Nakba as something other than a thing of the past. Rather than just commemorating the past dispossession, the focus was brought to the ongoing nature of Nakba, and to ways of thinking toward the future. This emphasis has also emerged in several projects that highlight the continuities of Israel's settler colonial project and contemplate the practicalities of return from different perspectives. The contemplative approach has not always been openly welcomed by the refugee communities in which the projects have been initiated. In the West Bank, I was told that despite being at the center of refugee subjectivity, the return is also a taboo subject that should not probed.

Though in these discussions that I had with both young and old refugees, right of return came to mean the right to have rights – in Lebanon, in the very Arendtian sense of getting the citizenship of a nation-state that would grant them – in the 2016 Nakba Day events, and also those of 2015 that I had participated in in Tyre, the return was still enacted on the past to future axis. Commemoration of the past is such a large part of the Palestinian refugee narrative that even when it was not the stated focus it still emerged in different ways, and understandably so. Like in many settler colonial settings, the justification for the political claims is derived from the injustices of the past (e.g. John & Carlson 2016; O'Malley & Kidman 2018) and, for

Palestinians, it is very much the trope of the village that forms the locus of commemorative claim making. The names of past Palestinian villages were painted on the sides of the train of return, accompanied by the names of present refugee camps, and slogans for the future return. An old man, from the Nakba generation, was filmed by a television crew as he told his story in and in front of the train, holding a Nakba Day poster, and the activists on the train were encouraging the refugees to bring them the keys to their pre-1948 homes, another important symbol of the return.

Narrative of return in light of the everyday realities

The train made its way along the Hebron road, surrounded by people who hopped in and out, tired of walking in the hot sun. Chants filled the air, accompanied by political songs played from loudspeakers and the sound of a vuvuzela blown by the young man standing on the 'driver's seat' of the train. When we approached the separation wall, Israeli soldiers were waiting by the watchtower, and as people got closer they sent them running with teargas grenades. The train, however, continued all the way to the soldiers and, when it reached them, the Palestinian protesters riding it were detained and the train confiscated. A few young boys continued to approach the soldiers only to run off again when the teargas grenades kept flying toward them, but most of the participants, us among them, started to slowly disperse in their own directions. On our way back to Dheisheh camp, my friends lamented how few people had been there. Though the participants had been much greater in number than at the Nakba day events I had participated in in Lebanon the year before, it was not the mass demonstration either. I was later told that in Kalandia camp the Nakba event had failed to take place at all because there was no one active enough to organize it.

The lack of popular interest in participating in such events says more about the present reality than about the inherent position that return holds among the refugees. My friends marching along the Hebron road were all still students, meaning that they were not obliged to work in order to support a family. They were active in civil society organizations, and rejected the PA's position. It was painstakingly clear that many people had neither the time nor the energy to be involved in demonstrating; they had more urgent matters with which to engage. Furthermore, the more than 70 years of refugeeness have slowly eroded refugees' belief in the implementation of the return, and the deteriorating political situation together with the hardships of

everyday life have created a situation in which politicians' speeches on the return are met with sarcastic remarks and tired disillusionment.

It is also painstakingly clear that refugees are not all in an equal position in defining the return or even in concentrating on claiming it. As anthropologist Diana Allan has noted in reference to the internalized narratives on commemorating Nakba and claiming the return,

> [t]he irony is that the expedient reframing of memory and identity in starkly political terms, with refugees as the human remnants of historic tragedy striving in their very being for return, puts the burden of remembrance on those with the least resources to bear it. (Allan 2014: 45)

The strength of the national discourse that has installed the image of refugees endlessly fighting for return has invested the refugee identity with pride and a sense of self-worth, but it has also enabled blame to be inflicted on those who make different, more individualistic, choices. Hence, a member of the Popular Committee in one of the Tyre camps explained how he tried to persuade *shebaab* to stay in the camp even though he knew he had nothing to offer them, and Khawla, living in one of the gatherings in the same city, declared that it would be better to go and fight in Palestine than to emigrate to Europe. In the West Bank, this mentality prompted Hassan to explain that he did not like how young people were leaving Palestine, that they should stay there to build the country, even though it was clear that there were not many building blocks available, and that life under occupation meant withstanding constant violence and humiliation. Though important and undeniable, the political insistence on concentrating only on return when addressing the refugee futures can result in sidelining the complex realities in which Palestinians build their lives, and futures. It also means disregarding the hopes that Palestinian refugees harbor at present in their daily lives, the ones they think are at least in some way attainable and might provide a change in the situation from which they hope to escape.

Political discourse on the right of return, and on Palestine in general, anchored to the past and the future, can thus be characterized as what Lauren Berlant calls cruel optimism, a desire that is actually an obstacle to flourishing in the present (Berlant 2011). The return, it should be stressed, is not cruel in itself but rather has been produced as such by the political maneuverings of different actors. Return has functioned as an excuse for the host nations, most notably Lebanon, not to grant Palestinians their basic rights, for they are to wait for the return and not be settled anywhere else. The internalized idea that life in a refugee camp should not be too

comfortable reflects the same mentality. This, together with the obstacles in the way of actually implementing the return, has created a reality in which rights are denied by referring to another right that is likewise denied.

This is not to say that return is not an actual hope for the refugees, nor that the call for return is futile or pointless, but while being a perfectly sound and justified claim for the refugees to make and struggle for, it has also provided a scapegoat for those hoping to delimit their rights. As such, it has forced generations of Palestinian refugees to live for the past and for the ever-more distant future, while being deprived of their rights in their present and lacking the possibilities for a good life. In a sense, they have been forced into a limbo of protracted waiting by a political narrative that has grown so big it cannot be disregarded, and which they do not even want to disregard as that would mean giving up an important part of their Palestinian identity. But it also means that the majority of the Palestinian refugees in the Middle East are not allowed to flourish in their present temporality if they remain in the camp spatialities. But as I have shown, the meanings of the return have also been renegotiated from one generation to the next, and from one position on exile to another. Though for some it meant waiting in the camps until the return became possible, even when that "until" remained undefined and might even go beyond their life spans, for some it meant a more general call for rights, including the right to live with dignity even while in exile.

8.2 Negotiating the national futures in the everyday of camp life

"*Bas hay siyasiye*", my field assistant protested in the middle of the interview. I knew to expect the comment, as he had exclaimed the same words many times before when those I was interviewing started to talk about Palestinian politics, Israeli occupation, or the right of return. "*Bas hay siyasiye*", "but this is politics" was his way of signaling to me – and to the person we were talking with – that now the discussion was turning away from everyday life in the camp and the kind of futures people imagined. You could tell that, from his perspective, the discussion was being sidetracked, that to answer my questions about life and future meant talking about life in Lebanon (in this case), the living conditions in the camp, the leaky roofs, the unemployment, the problems with UNRWA and the emigration, that for him, politics meant something separate from everyday life.

This particular interview was with a member of a Popular Committee in one of the camps of Tyre, which partly explains my field assistant's attitude. In Lebanon,

the political speeches repeated by those on the Popular Committees were often listened to with tired mistrust, and you could hear sarcastic remarks about the conduct of those employed by the political parties represented by the committees' members, as their work seemed something quite separate from the actual struggles the refugees had to endure on a daily basis. The lack of trust in the sincerity of the political leaders' words was accompanied by a detachment from the so-called national struggle, as many in Lebanon believed that they were not in a position to do anything to enhance these national objectives. Furthermore, in the present conditions it was more important for the refugees to hear promises about getting the right to work in Lebanon or about visas being made easier to acquire than to listen to politicians repeating the same and, in practice, empty words about the resistance and Palestine. Similar frustration was also expressed in Jordan, where Amal criticized the politicians for not acknowledging the reality in which the refugees lived. She denounced the way in which politicians used the return as a pretext when justifying the position of ex-Gazans in Jordan: "They insist not to give us national number to not forget that we have to go back to Palestine. That is not helping us, we're not going back and we're not living here. We are in the middle".

Though the future is the quintessential field for politics because it is the tense in which change becomes possible, toward which hopes for a better situation are directed, the reality rarely allows the future to be based solely on the solutions present in the ideological ideals. Problems of everyday life need to be addressed at a pace that political change rarely achieves. The waiting imposed on refugees by the national narrative that sees them staying in the camps, resisting by waiting for the possibility to return, can seem unreasonable in the present conditions that have so little to offer. But, even when everyday realities forced my Palestinian interlocutors to consider different options for changing their situation, the importance of the national future remained. The idea of return has become such an integral part of what it means to be a Palestinian refugee that even when individuals are not building their future on the hope that the return will respond to their needs, it is still part of how they talk about the future. The urgency of political change is nevertheless amplified for the deprived, for whom the prevalent conditions have little to offer.

Hence, my interlocutors echoed the same attitudes as Diana Allan (2014) had observed among the Palestinian refugees from Shatila: though the will to return had not disappeared, the present reality had made the refugees strive for something concrete and achievable, and hence made them open to solutions that could alleviate their dire living conditions and bring immediate relief (Allan 2014: 210). Camp dwellers were fatigued by national politics that had failed them by not being able to

improve their day-to-day conditions. This was clear across all my fields, but especially among those lacking even basic rights. The disappointment with national politics, and the understanding of what is actually attainable, had given precedence to the "near-future", and to living, improving, and hoping in the horizon of the exile, while the return remained relevant on the level of political, long-term futurity (see also Feldman 2016).

In Lebanon, the tiredness felt toward the political expectations placed on the refugees emerged in an encounter early one Monday morning, when we were sitting by the roundabout next to El Buss camp, waiting for a friend of the person I was with to pick us up on our way to Beirut. He was late, as usual, and we sat on plastic chairs outside a coffee shop, drinking strong coffee from small disposable cups. The street was starting to wake up, with children heading to school and people to work, but the streets around the roundabout that later would be jammed and filled with the sounds of cars honking their way through were still pleasantly quiet. While we were waiting, an elderly man came by, wishing us good morning with the usual *sabah al-kheer* to which we answered with the appropriate *sabah an-noor*. He had already passed us when he suddenly turned back, talked frantically to my friend for a short while and then continued on his way toward El Buss camp. My friend asked whether I understood what the old man had said, and after I confessed that I had not grasped everything, he continued to explain that the man came back to urge him to tell me about Palestine, about the return and resistance. My friend seemed somewhat irritated by the occurrence, snorting that it was easy for the man to talk because all his sons were abroad, living in Germany. My friend was no outsider to the national struggle, having fought in the civil war and belonging to a family of fighters, as they were described by one person I met, but at that moment he stated that he was not thinking of struggle that much anymore. Rather, he preferred to think about the life at hand: when to go fishing, what to eat that day, the mundane issues of everyday life. These rejections of the role of the refugee as someone committed to waiting or to enhancing the national struggle reflect both the condition of refugeeness and the political stagnation that has characterized the situation for a long time.

The mistrust of politicians' capabilities to deliver and the general sense of powerlessness in changing anything does not, however, denote that Palestine in itself was not discussed with affection, nor that my interlocutors did not justify their decisions also based on the national narrative. Palestinian news was keenly followed, and many shared political posts on Facebook, especially when something had happened in Israel/Palestine, and the same person who on one occasion commented sarcastically on the possibility of the return might on another mention that they

would not leave the camps nor the host country but for Palestine. Furthermore, those who planned to emigrate also felt the need to express their commitment to Palestine, by naming it as their first choice of residence or providing assurances that they would enhance the Palestinian political cause in the place to which they emigrated by educating others and participating in demonstrations. In Lebanon I even heard assurances that in Europe people would have better chances to do something to enhance the Palestinian cause than if they stayed in Lebanon.

After more than 70 years of life in the refugee camps, it is self-evident that my interlocutors are invested in the reality of the host states and the possibilities they can offer. Palestine, on the other hand, is something much more abstract, part of political talks that in the present reality can offer little relief in the face of everyday problems, especially for those in Lebanon and, to some extent, in Jordan. These political talks are important but, in reality, most of the refugees are forced to negotiate their relation to the ideals of the national narratives amid the diminishing opportunities of the everyday.

8.3   The luxury of "waiting out"

"In five years, the camps will be empty"! "All those who get the possibility to leave, will do so". "There will be only old people left here, the youth have emigrated". These sentenced were uttered by the older generation of refugees, those over fifty, when describing the clear trend among the refugees in Lebanon. Their prognosis on the future of the camps was tinged with a hint of disapproval and judgement, reflecting the centrality of the camp to the national cause: the camps need to remain as a reminder of refugeeness and nonbelonging and they should not be abandoned or demolished until return becomes possible. The refugees should "wait out" (Hage 2009b) the crisis that denies them a secure position, to be rewarded with the return in the end. However, simultaneously there was a quiet acknowledgement that Lebanon had little to offer Palestinians, and that even waiting out had become almost impossible. To borrow Ghassan Hage's (2009b: 104) zeitgeist, whereas in the 1960s and 1970s the national momentum was able to alleviate both the crisis that refugees faced and the state of waiting, at present this crisis has become normalized and the political setbacks experienced after the revolutionary momentum of the 1970s have produced the condition of endless waiting and enduring, from the national point of view.

Unlike for many other refugees who are also in the state of waiting (see Bendixsen & Eriksen 2018; Brun 2015; el-Shaarawi 2015; Horst & Grabska 2015; however cf. Malkki 1995), for Palestinians in refugee camps this state can also be viewed as a political practice characterized by national ends, and thus invested with meaning and central political claims, whether they be the right of return or the end of the occupation. The waiting as one manifestation of the struggle has become a part of Palestinian refugee identity. Being a Palestinian refugee means that you have suffered, and that you struggle (Peteet 1994, 2005), are steadfast and fight for your homeland, and never give up on your right of return. Julie Peteet has been one to emphasize the centrality of resistance, violence and suffering for Palestinian national narratives and identity formation, especially for narratives on displacement and exile. She has further noted that these attributes are associated especially with camp dwellers, who epitomize both the resistance and the peasant background that represent the "authentic Palestinian identity rooted in the land, struggle, and suffering" (Peteet 2005: 155).

This rather strict definition of what it is to be a Palestinian came through especially in Lebanon, where I was stunned when some did not refer to those who were afforded Lebanese citizenship in the 1990s as Palestinians, even though they were living in a Palestinian gathering and had experienced much the same difficulties as the rest of the gathering's residents. In Lebanon, statelessness and the rightlessness that ensued very much defined what it was to be a Palestinian – "because I'm a Palestinian" being the explanation for many daily problems – whereas in the West Bank and especially in Jordan (see Achilli 2015) there was more space for manifold positions on what it meant to be a Palestinian refugee.

However, in the West Bank the politicization of the everyday was also reflected in the ways in which positions toward the future were initially expressed to outsiders such as me. Both there and in Lebanon, it was the commitment to Palestine, and especially to the right of return, that was addressed when my interlocutors tried to justify their unwillingness to "wait out". Farid, who had graduated in computer and communication engineering from a Lebanese university a year before I met him, justified his decision to emigrate to Germany by stressing how it was impossible to return to Palestine. After graduation, he had managed to get short-term employment in Beirut but, since the project had ended, his only source of income was the little he was able to put together by tutoring students from UNRWA schools. Like almost everyone I talked with, he saw no future in Lebanon and hence emigration emerged as the only option. He nevertheless stressed how he would rather go to Palestine and he presented the impossibility of doing so as justification for emigrating to Germany.

Edward Said's words, "[y]ou accept the narrowness of opportunities as a given, and you consider change, for the foreseeable future, as bringing worse, rather than better, conditions" (Said 1993: 100), resonate strongly with the reality Palestinians currently face in Lebanon and *ma fii musta'bal houn*, there is no future here, was an oft-repeated mantra among my interlocutors. The unstable situation in occupied Palestine was another common topic brought up, discussed with a defensive and justifying tone in relation to plans for emigration. Simultaneously however, Palestine was often mentioned as the place where a good life would be possible, "because Palestine is the homeland" and "in Palestine we would have our rights", which clearly reflected the statelessness experienced by Palestinian refugees living in Lebanon. However, the sheer impossibility of getting to Palestine led the refugees to seek life elsewhere.

It is in this wider context that Hassan denounced emigration from the West Bank. "I don't like this idea of going outside [Palestine]", he declared one evening. A moment before, Hassan had told me how he hoped to support his children so that "they don't have to start the way I started", and for him, it was crucial that they continue to live in Palestine rather than follow many others by emigrating: "You should start here, work here and die here". Hassan did think that it was acceptable for someone to go outside Palestine to study, but that they should then return and build their lives there. In the West Bank, I met people who had done precisely that, studied in the United States but returned after graduating, mainly at their families' insistence. For them, building life after coming back had been all but easy, as they struggled with finding employment and adjusting back to life under occupation with all its restrictions. Hassan, on the other hand, was in a somewhat better position to support his children than many other refugees living in camps. Working with a stable income for an insurance company and having connections to the PA meant that, though meager, he had resources with which to facilitate his children's future in Palestine. When building a new house with loans he had taken with his wife, he had added an apartment beneath the house they were currently living in so that his oldest son could move there when he decided to get married. With his connections, Hassan had the possibilities to help his son in finding work, and he had sufficient financial means to enroll his oldest daughter in university – possibilities many others did not have.

Hence, for Hassan there were no pressing reasons from a socioeconomic perspective to seek future outside Palestine, which, for better and for worse, was home for him and his family. Continuing living in Palestine is, however, also a political project. It is a showcase example of *sumud* (steadfastness) against the

occupation, which forms yet another integral part of Palestinians' political discourse (Schiocchet 2011). When the aim of Israeli policies is to get rid of Palestinians by making their life unbearable, staying becomes a form of resisting. In practice, many also lack the resources to do otherwise. In those cases, making the best of life in the camps and gatherings is what people can do to build a better future. And, it should be noted, it is also what many would like to do, if conditions allowed: staying close to friends and family, in a place they are familiar with and which is of cultural and social importance. If the possibility to continue in education, find employment, get married, and live in freedom and security were achievable, the majority of my interlocutors would have preferred to continue living where their memories and significant relations were located.

The politicized reality in the West Bank has rendered basically everything part of the national struggle, but it was, nevertheless, not a coincidence that it was someone in Hassan's position who voiced the need to stay in Palestine. In all of my fields, it seemed that those with at least relative economic security were the most vocal when it came to the traditional national narratives, and to political commitment to Palestine in general. Those in a more precarious position seemed to have less interest in promoting the need to stay in the camps or, in the case of the West Bank, in Palestine.

In the wider Palestinian context, I have been somewhat surprised at how much more single-minded – and even suspicious and wary of me as an outsider – Palestinian activists in the West and those living in urban centers across the Middle East among other middle-class citizenry have been compared with those I have encountered in the refugee camps, even though those in the camps have much more to gain – or lose for that matter – from the political solution. Those in the camps seemed to have a much more nuanced and, I would say, grounded view on the situation and the ways out from it, most likely because their situation did not allow them the luxury of endless waiting. The idea that waiting out is a luxury few of my interlocutors have, has stayed with me since my first visit to the field in Lebanon, and hence, when I read Diana Allan (2014: 210) describing the same phenomenon, I found myself nodding in agreement. She notes that those with middle-class security and means have been the most vocal and uncompromising in their views on the right of return, whereas those spoken about – the refugees in the camps – rarely share such a luxury (ibid.).

At the same time, those with little to lose have been the ones willing to take the greatest risks in fighting for a solution and the implementation of the return, as the Great March of Return that started in Gaza in February 2018 shows (see Abusalim

2018). Correspondingly, in the West Bank, those who had been able to achieve a good economic situation were also the ones who just wanted to live in peace, as Munir phrased it. They did not want to challenge the Palestinian Authority, as good relations with it were usually the precondition for securing a good situation in the first place. They did not want to get too involved in demonstrations that directly challenged the Israeli forces, because that could also compromise their position due to the punitive measures that Israel – or the PA – might inflict on them. The gradually worsening situation combined with diminishing hopes that a political solution was within reach had reorganized people's day-to-day aspirations. In his work in an organization advocating refugees' rights, Munir had noticed how people's concerns had shifted from making the situation better to preventing it from getting worse: "[People are like] I just want to live my life, I don't want this situation to be worse. *Khalas* [enough], it's like what happened has already happened. It's like we don't want our rights back, we just don't want the issues to get worse, that's all. We want to take care of our daily problems".

The daily problems referred to the economic frames of the everyday: how to pay the mortgage, how to cover the children's tuition fees and, for those less fortunate, how to put food on the table. These daily concerns were framed, and amplified, by the occupation, which not only created corporeal vulnerability but affected every aspect of Palestinians' lives in the occupied areas. Yet, the fatigue in the face of it was evident, and was reflected in the mentality described by Munir. Facing new means of land confiscation, new settlements, new restrictions, a new round of violence in addition to the mundane and normalized levels of physical abuse, and new forms of oppression has defined Palestinians' lives for decades, and the steadily deteriorating situation has made people weary. On an individual level, and in discourse, people continue to resist on a daily basis, but though I have been hearing talk of the possibility of a new intifada ever since I first visited the West Bank in 2008, the type of uprising that could be called popular in the same sense as the First Intifada has not emerged[78]. The tiredness with the situation could be detected in the atmosphere in the camps, and when I was visiting Nada's relatives in Kalandia camp, her uncle sighed and said that people's dreams were getting smaller and smaller every day. Instead of dreaming about their villages and return, they were just hoping to live a normal life, with the same possibilities as "people outside" and without the restrictions and fear inflicted by the occupation. Nada nicely captured how life under the occupation affected people's ambitions, and the ambivalences it entailed:

> But as much as we plan what we want to achieve in the future, the occupation comes in and puts more restrictions and more laws and, you know, like,

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prevents us from traveling even inside our own country. These factors, it's very difficult to maintain the same level of ambitions. You become less passioned every day. Some want to travel; some insist not to lose hope. Some, even when they couldn't achieve what they always wanted, they are still happy, still living in Palestine.

8.4   Reaching Palestine

Observed from Lebanon and Jordan, the refugees living in the West Bank were sometimes described as the lucky ones because, despite having to endure the ills of the occupation, they were still living in Palestine. However, in these two host countries I encountered very different perspectives on going to Palestine. In Lebanon, one of the benefits of emigration was named as the possibility to visit Palestine. Asma even considered marriage for that reason, as getting married to a European man would allow her to get a citizenship that would enable her to go to Palestine. Emigration had literally become a passport to Palestine for Palestinian refugees in Lebanon, which I witnessed at first hand in a Palestinian city in northern West Bank, where I traveled to greet the relatives of a family I knew from Lebanon. When I told the family in Lebanon that I would be traveling to Palestine the following spring, I was given the address and mobile number of an aunt living in the West Bank. While the family in Lebanon originated from Haifa and had been forced to flee when the Zionist forces took over the city, the other side of the family had remained there even after the state of Israel was established. After Israel occupied southern Lebanon in 1982, some members of the family were able to gain permits to visit their relatives and, at present, the connections between the divided relatives are maintained through social media, by messaging via WhatsApp and by commenting on one another's posts on Facebook. I, however, was able to be physically present in both places, and thus was urged to contact the aunt while in Palestine. When I reached the aunt's house, waiting for me were not only relatives who lived in the West Bank, but, to my surprise, also a family I had met in Lebanon the previous year.

This family of relatives had emigrated to northern Europe during the Lebanese Civil War and had lived there long enough to gain a European citizenship. With their EU passports, they were able to fly to Ben Gurion airport in Tel Aviv, pass through the Israeli border security, and enter the land that is off-limits to them as Palestinian refugees. It had become their annual holiday to visit their relatives in the West Bank, and while the parents of the family traveled to Lebanon as well, their adult son

refused to return there. In his opinion, there was nothing to see in Lebanon and the people there, both Lebanese and Palestinians, were rude and unfriendly, while he considered those living in Palestine as much more hospitable and, in general, better people. To his relatives' disapproval, he talked about the beauty of *Israel*, which resulted in a dispute over the terminology, with their telling him to talk about *thameniye o arb'ain* (forty-eight, a way of referring to the Palestine of 1948, the parts that are now internationally recognized as Israel). As a European citizen, he was able to travel across historical Palestine, on both sides of the Green Line, which was not possible for his relatives in the West Bank, and even less so for his relatives in the refugee camps in Lebanon.

Their EU passports had provided the family with a possibility that others also desired. As well as Asma, a few others told me of their consideration of the possibility of marrying a foreigner for the sole reason of getting a citizenship that would allow them to travel to Palestine. That emigrated family members had made their way to Palestine had clearly become a topic of discussion in Lebanon, as it was considered one of the benefits of acquiring a European citizenship.

While Israel was clearly viewed as the villain of the story, my interlocutors in Lebanon did not seem to have a moral dilemma over the fact that they needed permission from the occupier to access their ancestral lands, which in Jordan was part of the consideration. Unlike in Lebanon, where the refugees were able to reach Palestine only via a European citizenship, in Jordan the peace agreement and normalization policies between Jordan and Israel provided the refugees with the chance to travel to the whole of historical Palestine. This chance, however, seemed to generate its own set of moral considerations. One Saturday, I got the chance to participate in a class organized by an NGO working with the Palestinian refugee youth in Amman. The group had gathered several times previously to discuss diverse topics and, in the meeting I attended, the theme was values and how to practice them in different situations. The room was half-empty when I arrived but by the time the project directors started to give an introduction to the day's theme, it was full of youths of both genders. The director asked the participants to imagine the following situation: Ibrahim is a Palestinian refugee living in Jordan. He hopes to travel to Palestine, to see the land to which he should have the right to return. However, to go to Palestine he would have to apply for a visa from the Israeli officials and even pay for them to get him the required permits. Also, he knows a person who would be able to smuggle him in, which would excuse him from having to deal with the Israelis but still allow him to visit Palestine. But Ibrahim is still unsure about doing this as he doubts that anyone in Jordan would believe that he had not dealt with the

Israelis, even if he claimed to have been smuggled in rather than having applied for permission from the Israeli officials. Because of this, Ibrahim decides that he should not go to Palestine.

The example was followed by a lively discussion among the participants, who seemed to mostly agree with Ibrahim's reasoning. Though the lecture included many other discussions, this example caught my attention because it clearly delineated the problematics that are specific to Jordan as a country hosting Palestinian refugees. The reasoning behind the example was that applying for a visa from Israeli officials would imply giving recognition to Israel as a sovereignty that had the right to determine who was welcome in the lands that should belong to Palestinians in the first place. The reason Ibrahim chooses not to go even though he has the chance to do so without having to ask for permission from the Israelis, is that in the Palestinian community in Jordan he would nevertheless be considered a traitor as most would think that he had, in fact, applied for the visa. Had the case been something I heard only in a lecture it probably would not have caught my attention in the way it did. However, I had heard similar reasoning before, from a Palestinian who told me that he had cancelled his plans to visit Palestine because his uncle told him that it would not be proper to ask for permission from the occupier.

This reasoning is very specific to the politics of being a Palestinian refugee in Jordan. Palestinians in Lebanon do not engage in similar discussions simply because Lebanon does not have diplomatic relations with Israel and the boycotting of Israel is an official state policy, with interaction with Israel and Israelis being considered treason. Moreover, Palestinian refugees from Lebanon eagerly took the chance to visit Palestine if they gained a citizenship that would allow them to do so, as has been discussed above. Those in the West Bank, on the other hand, were forced to deal with the Israeli soldiers. Though many organizations and individuals there refused to cooperate with Israel if they had the possibility to do so, seeing cooperation as a normalization of the occupation, in everyday matters they had no other choice but to apply to the Israelis for permits, for Israel as the occupying power had control over multiple aspects of Palestinians' everyday life, including the possibilities to move, build a house, or have a residency permit.

Palestinians in Jordan are thus in a unique position when it comes to Palestinian refugee communities in the Middle East. Because the Hashemite Kingdom has signed a peace deal with the state of Israel, they have the juridical possibility to be involved with Israel and Israelis, unlike the Palestinian refugees in Lebanon, while at the same time having the possibility of refusing to do so, unlike Palestinian refugees in the West Bank and other parts of Israel/Palestine. Though many of them did visit

their relatives in the West Bank, it is interesting in itself that a discourse on boycotting such a possibility existed. For Palestinians in Jordan, the refusal to visit Palestine was thus a political statement in a situation in which their host sovereign was in diplomatic and economic contact with the state they still viewed as the enemy occupying their home country.

Most of the people I have met during my fieldwork were born and have built their lives in exile. They have witnessed the decline of national politics capable of unifying Palestinians across borders. For many of them, the conditions produced by that decline are all they have known, the days of revolutionary resistance being long gone by the time they were born. Furthermore, for most of my interlocutors, their living conditions did not allow them to wait for a political solution; they had to plan their lives in respect of the reality around them, each host sovereign having its own specificities. They studied, looked for work, got married and started families all with the idea of achieving a better life directing their decisions.

Nevertheless, even when return to Palestine was not discussed as something that would take place in the foreseeable future, Palestine still remained the place to relate to, as a place where rights would be located. This side of the discussion was amplified especially when life as a Palestinian refugee was defined by rightlessness. For Nassim in the West Bank, the return meant getting those rights that were denied in the present of occupation and, for my interlocutors in Lebanon, rights would become accessible in Palestine, "because it is the homeland": there it would be possible to work, own a house, and live life without constantly running up against obstacles. In fact, Tobias Kelly suggests that meaningful return would have to incorporate these types of consideration; it has to go beyond "narrowly spatial definitions" and also "explore the economic, political and legal conditions that enable people to feel 'at home'" (Kelly 2009: 37).

In spite of all the aspirations aiming to improve the lives of Palestinian refugees one individual at a time, the right for the refugees to return to Palestine remains the collective socially and politically affirmed way to view the future. The return, in the case of my interlocutors also, is such a determining part of Palestinian refugees' (political) being that even those personal futures that do not accommodate it as their main objective, those that aim, rather, to obtain more immediate answers to experienced hardships, negotiate with it as the shared commitment. As noted at the beginning of this chapter, the return simply exists in a different timeframe and responds to different needs than the individual futures. In the deprived conditions

of the everyday, the individual often takes precedence and, to conclude with a quote from Fawaz Turki, ideology alone cannot be the frame in which life is examined:

> If you live a comfortable existence where the problems of life are examined within the matrix of ideology and rationality, your world is a habitable one. If you give twenty years of your life in a refugee camp, you have paid a high price. If you are asked to sacrifice another twenty, the price becomes intolerable. If you are asked to make your yet unborn child take your burden, you are committing an injustice. If you look around you and your existence is and has been a meaningless and tedious round of sparring with the vagaries of life for the most basic and the most simple needs of nature, when now you win, now you lose, ideology and rationality go out the mudhouse window into the courtyard, near the water pump, at the refugee camp. And because you are fatigued and dispossessed, you want to accept the part and not the whole. The Palestinian problem has never been to the Palestinian people a crisis, a crisis of political intent, but a tragedy, a tragedy they lived every day of their lives. (Turki 1972: 145)

Conclusion: where the rights are located, where the future is possible

> Anything is better than what we have now – but still the road forward is blocked, the instruments of the present are insufficient, we can't get to the past. (Said 1993: 75)

The aim of this dissertation has been to ethnographically explore how Palestinian refugees are negotiating their futures in the conditions of their decades-long exile. The topic has been vast, as the process has had the potential to include every imaginable aspect of everyday life and span temporally from the pre-exile past to the predictions of what the future might bring about. What has further widened the scope of the work has been the desire to cover the refugee conditions under different host sovereigns, in Lebanon, the West Bank, and Jordan, requiring not only fieldwork in each site but also familiarization with the histories and the ways in which Palestinian refugees have been positioned in each of these places. Nevertheless, this research has not been a comparative endeavor in the traditional sense, but rather one that has attempted to take the (spatiotemporal) context seriously. Though there is no denying that Palestinian refugees share a sense of common identity, struggles, and even national 'destiny', the more than 70 years of exile have caused the conditions to diverge and have created what activists have called "the culture(s) of exile". The multi-sited approach has enabled me to acknowledge the differing realities that exist under the host sovereigns, and thus to do justice to the diversity of Palestinian experiences. The question has been how Palestinian refugees have negotiated the futures they hope to achieve in these different contexts. I have further asked how these negotiations have been molded by the histories and politics of the host societies and the Palestinian national narratives that have had both social and material manifestations.

Answering these questions required asking smaller, more manageable ones, and hence in each chapter I embarked on an illumination of the different dimensions of the wider topic. Taking my lead from both ontological hermeneutics and anthropology of the future, I reasoned that understanding the future necessitates comprehending the past and the present it has created. Therefore, I have explored

the trajectories of Palestinian refugee communities in the sites covered in this dissertation, scrutinized the present conditions in the refugee camps, and asked what resources Palestinian refugees have at their disposal, and whether these are sufficient enough to meet their needs. These explorations paved the way for actually turning to the future, as they enabled me to understand the preconditions that both the everyday and the sociopolitical imaginaries set for what is hoped for and aspired to.

What then, were the things that were wanted from the future? A simple answer is: the possibilities for a better life. Aiming for a better life is a basic human mission or, as Hassan, my interlocutor in the West Bank, put it, "it is human nature to improve yourself". Who would not want to live a more comfortable life and enjoy physical and economic security? What, however, framed this mission for my interlocutors were the realities of refugeeness, the decades-long exile in the refugee camps, and the continuing denial of even basic human rights, not to speak of the political rights that would be granted via the fulfilment of Palestinians' national aspirations. In this context, improving the conditions becomes a mission of a different caliber, as how the future was viewed was affected not only by the compromised conditions but by the refugeeness itself, and the political narratives associated with it.

Many of the difficulties faced by my interlocutors are accentuated by the general situation in the Middle East, where youth unemployment in particular delimits the horizons of young adults and forces them to postpone significant life events. Palestinian refugees are hit hard by these more generally shared trends, as their social, political, and legal positionings amplify the problems faced in the everyday and lessen the resources they have to overcome them. Since I last visited my fields in 2019, the situation has, in many ways, only deteriorated. Lebanon is experiencing an economic catastrophe involving a currency crisis, hyperinflation and rising unemployment, which started to unravel in the country in October 2019 and was made worse by the lockdowns imposed due to the global COVID-19 pandemic. Years of political mismanagement and neglect reached their horrific culmination on August 4, 2020, when 2750 tonnes of ammonium nitrate exploded at Beirut's port, causing more than 200 people to lose their lives, injuring thousands more and damaging houses kilometers away from the center of the explosion. In the West Bank, the impending Israeli annexation plans have created uncertainty and the COVID-19 pandemic has caused the already difficult economic situation to deteriorate and produced discontent toward the PA's handling of the situation. The camps are, again, in a vulnerable position, as the spread of the virus to the crowded refugee dwellings, where social distancing is in practice impossible, has generated fear. Jordan has,

again, proved to be the most stable of my fields, but the pandemic has taken its toll there also.

For my interlocutors, it was the vulnerabilities experienced in everyday life that, on a general level, determined what was wanted from the future. Palestinian refugees in Lebanon aimed to counter the conditions created by their statelessness and exclusion by seeking ways to access rights. Those in the West Bank hoped to escape the violence and deprivation they were forced to withstand under Israeli occupation. In Jordan, the conditions were more diverse but the aim, for many, was to find economic stability and, for some, to obtain more freedom to seek things in life. For all the interlocutors in my fieldsites, achieving a better economic situation was, however, the basis that would have enabled them to achieve their other aims. It would have allowed them to enhance their material living conditions in the camps or to move out from them, thus creating more privacy and independence. It would have allowed them to continue their education, to access services in the private sector, to buy the things they wanted, to get married, to provide a good living standard for their family, and even to travel and experience the world beyond the constraints of the host sovereign.

A better economic situation could not, however, overcome their position as Palestinian refugees. In Lebanon, they would continue to be stateless and thus lack rights to employment, ownership, and movement. In the West Bank, they would all the same face the violent occupation and the limitations it imposed. In Jordan, enhancing the economic situation had the greatest potential for change, but for the ex-Gazans there it could not provide citizenship and the social rights that entailed. Neither could it compensate for the injustices Palestinian refugees had endured over the decades due to Israel's settler colonial project and the international community's at times silent, at times open, approval of and support for it.

However, what could resolve the difficulties created by the refugees' position as Palestinian refugees is a just political solution. The call for right of return has structured the refugees' political being to varying degrees since they were dispossessed. While the trope of the ancestral villages and the figure of a camp refugee as someone steadfastly waiting and enduring the ills of exile prevails, it does not go unchallenged, and my interlocutors self-evidently considered the return from the viewpoint of the present conditions. For them it came to mean getting the rights they were currently denied: to have the right to movement, security, and employment, to have the possibility to live in freedom, lead a dignified live, and be protected and cared for by a political entity to which they could say they belonged.

The present political reality does not, however, allow for much hopefulness in reaching such a solution. Rather, this possibility seems to be slipping further and further away, with Israeli policies being all the time more openly discriminatory and oppressive, and with the United States' unconditional support for Israel to have what it has wanted ever since it was established: the lands without their Palestinian inhabitants[79]. Hence, to expect Palestinian refugees to count on a political solution alleviating their everyday precarities would be unreasonable. They have little of the basis for a "'historically' acquired sense of security in facing what the future will bring" (Hage 2003a: 26), and the possibility to concentrate on political objectives has in many cases been overshadowed by their trying to survive the problems of everyday life; many simply do not have the luxury of "waiting out", as has been discussed in this dissertation.

Nevertheless, though it would not be accurate to say that Palestinian refugees will disregard the national aspirations, at present the hopes for a better life, the ones they consider achievable, do not direct toward Palestine. The national objectives, the right of return and free Palestine, did emerge as part of the future, but not within a timeframe that could respond to their present needs (cf. Feldman 2016). Rather, the limitations experienced in the refugee spatialities needed more prompt solutions. In many cases the answer was to leave it all behind, to try their luck somewhere where their horizon of possibilities was not narrowed by their position as Palestinian refugees. Emigration emerged as an answer to the vulnerability experienced in the present conditions, especially in Lebanon where the dire conditions left little else to build the futures on, but also in the West Bank and Jordan, where my interlocutors considered their possibilities to start anew in another part of the world.

The appeal of emigration highlights the relevance of the socioeconomic situation but also of the general context that produces different opportunities for people to seize. The spatial context, and all it entails, is thus extremely relevant as it provides people with different possibilities and options in their everyday lives. As long as possibilities are unequally distributed within a territorially divided world in which membership to a given territory provides the basis for distributing rights, those in places with limited resources for providing decent standards of living will seek the possibility to reach a territory and obtain a membership that provides better chances for attaining the aspired-to conditions. This goes hand in hand with the mission of improving yourself, as, in the words of anthropologist Jarrett Zigon,

> dwelling is not simply being able to live one's everydayness. Humans have incredible adaptability to all kinds of conditions in which they can live. […] In contrast, to dwell is to be-in-the-world such that one's being is not reduced to

such a degree that being-in-the-world becomes something like being trapped in a world. (Zigon 2018: 119)

Mirroring this atmosphere, Henrik Vigh has written that "crisis, when it is chronic, may become normal in the sense that it is what there is most, but it does not become normal in the sense that this is how things should be" (Vigh 2008: 11). My interlocutors were extremely aware that their living conditions were not 'normal', that rather they were 'trapped' in their position, and that life had more to offer than what they could expect from their present conditions. Again, especially in Lebanon, it was clear that the position of Palestinian refugees did not provide a decent basis for living life to its fullest, and that the prevalent socially constructed way to discuss overcoming the hardships faced in everyday life was to consider emigration, even for those for whom the actualization of this hope was extremely unlikely.

Hence, aspiring to a future is not only a temporal endeavor but simultaneously always a spatial one. The temporal is negotiated within a spatial frame, and though the intention here has not been to reduce time and space to their Kantian form of *a priori*, they nevertheless both delineate how we experience the everyday. When my interlocutors directed their attention toward the future, they were not only asking *when* they would graduate, get married, or be able to secure a good job and start a family, but also *where* they would be doing those things. They considered the spatial frames of life: where they would be living in the future, what the camps would look like in few years' time, whether they would be able to achieve their dreams where they were currently living, and where they would have the best options to live a good life. These questions reveal the spatial dimension of the future, but also its intertwined temporal and spatial nature on a more general level, as the present spatial context with its relationalities affects how these questions are answered. What was specific about the aspirations of my interlocutors was that, more often than not, the aspired-to future was located in a space different than the one in which they presently lived. The better future was somewhere else, whether it was the grand national future in Palestine through the return, the more individually oriented future that would materialize through emigration, or a future with better conditions outside the camp in the host country.

These futures were negotiated within the Palestinian refugee community, within communally constructed understandings of what a good life is and what the possible ways of achieving it are. They were also negotiated within the communal subjectivity of being a Palestinian refugee, the understanding of the camp and of Palestine, and relational forms of being. Furthermore, in the case of the West Bank, they were negotiated within the reality framed by the violence inflicted by the Israeli forces that

could at any time bring the future to an abrupt end. This happened to one young man from Dheisheh, who had been given his long-dreamed-of chance to travel to Europe. It had been his first time abroad and, according to my friends who knew him, he had enjoyed the experience immensely. But soon after he returned from the trip, he was shot dead by Israeli soldiers who had infiltrated the camp.

The image conveyed by this dissertation is probably rather dim. The histories of Palestinian refugeeness are full of violence, suffering and injustices that have yet to be amended. The present comprises multiple forms of vulnerability: of statelessness, of violent and repressive occupation, of inadequate living conditions in refugee camps, of economic hardship, of discrimination, of continuous uncertainty, and of diminishing trust toward those who should stand up for the refugees' rights and secure their wellbeing. Therefore, the future is also full of difficulties, as the refugees try to navigate amid the present vulnerabilities created by the more than 70 years of refugeeness in order to achieve a less precarious basis for their lives. This meta-narrative of vulnerability and lack of possibilities that emerges from the choice I made to concentrate on the conditions of refugeeness inevitably hides other dimensions of everyday life, but it does reveal something of the reality in which my interlocutors live. Even when everyday life goes on in the camps with few drastic changes, and with a multitude of human experiences, it is the conditions, and the hopes and aspirations they generate, that tell of how the lived reality is evaluated, even when the hopes are not achieved: they reveal what is valued and what should be different.

This dissertation has examined the Palestinian refugees' situation in its temporal and spatial complexity and has arrived at the conclusion that the present conditions provide insufficient tools for the refugees to build their lives. The actual themes discussed in this work are in no way new. Back in the late 1970s, Rosemary Sayigh (1977, 1979) described the difficult economic situation of the refugees, the dire living conditions in the camps, and the discrepancies that arose between political commitment to Palestine and improvements in standards of living, and she was by no means the first to touch on these topics. The specific aim of this work has, however, been to consider these different topics as part of the spatiotemporal trajectory of Palestinian refugees: what are the conditions in Palestinian refugee camps at this point in their decades-long exile, and what types of future can these conditions foster among those now preparing for their adult lives?

Much has changed since Sayigh wrote her analysis, both in politics and on the ground, but what is noteworthy is that it is much the same problems, albeit in transforming forms, that continue to affect the lives of Palestinian refugees, and have

in many ways only become graver as the decades have passed. This in itself speaks to the importance of continuing the discussion and continuing to listen to Palestinian refugees' stories and experiences. There are newer, and thus maybe more 'compelling', refugee communities in the Middle East, such as those from Syria, yet the Palestinian refugees' situation continues to be *the* refugee situation in the region, and understanding its changing dynamics allows for a more comprehensive understanding of how other refugee communities are treated. Furthermore, hearing the Palestinian refugees' voices is part of their larger political case: they are still there, they are still refugees, their case has not been resolved, and their futures continue to be compromised.

Notes

[1] This number is from UNRWA statistics and includes Palestinians registered by the agency in Jordan, Lebanon, Syria, the West Bank, and the Gaza Strip. Available at https://www.unrwa.org/resources/about-unrwa/unrwa-figures-2019-2020 [last accessed 21.10.2020].

[2] UNRWA in Figures 2018-2019. Available at https://www.unrwa.org/resources/about-unrwa/unrwa-figures-2018-2019.

[3] As Nakba is what created Palestinians as refugees, it is also the point from which the generations are counted. The generations (*jeel*) are also thematically named according to major events or experiences that define their experiences. Hence, there is the generation of Palestine and of Nakba, which is the first generation of refugees who remembered life in Palestine and experienced the expulsions, and there is the generation of revolution (*jeel al-thawra*), the second-generation refugees who experienced the rise of the Palestinian resistance movement from the 1960s to the 1980s. There are also institutional ways to define the generations (such as *jeel al-UNRWA*) and location-specific generations (such as, in Lebanon, *jeel al-harb*, the generation of war, and *jeel al-intifada* for those who were part of the First Intifada in the occupied West Bank). For the third generation, the defining feature is the Oslo Agreements and the transformations they brought not only to everyday life in occupied Palestine but also to Palestinian national politics and its priorities. In contrast, the fourth generation that is now living through its formative years has experienced a steady decline in living conditions, and a general disillusionment with the promises of the Palestinian political elite. On the refugee generations, see Peteet 2005: 95, 98, Richter-Devroe 2013.

[4] The unofficial statistic is that the majority of Jordanians are of Palestinian origin, and many have a hybrid identity as both Palestinian and Jordanian. Jordan also has small Circassian, Armenian, and Chechen minorities, in addition to which some Jordanians trace their descent to the surrounding Arab countries. In fact, only a minority of Jordanian nationals are of 'local' Transjordanian origin. There are also multiple refugee communities, the largest from Iraq and Syria, and migrant workers who live in the country more or less permanently. See Massad 2001: 263–275, Mansour-Ille et al. 2018.

[5] UNRWA 'Consolidated Eligibility and Registration Instructions (CERI)'. Available at https://www.unrwa.org/userfiles/2010011995652.pdf [last accessed 21.10.2020].

[6] Only the Gaza Strip and Syria are left out of UNRWA's field of operation, for rather obvious reasons. The civil war in Syria prevented me from conducting research there and, though it is possible to get permission to access the Gaza Strip, this would have been difficult for both practical and ethical reasons (it would have been highly problematic to do research aimed at learning about how future is negotiated and aspired to be in conditions such as those in Gaza, which, due to the Israeli siege and recurring assaults, was deemed uninhabitable by 2020, according to a UN report). Though this research is not about UNRWA, the presence of Palestinian refugee camps in the fields of its operation provided a clear starting point for determining where to head.

7 This research was not evaluated by an ethics committee as it does not fall under any of the cases in which a statement from Tampere University's ethical committee is required. A statement is necessary if the research involves an intervention in the physical integrity of subjects, if it deviates from the principle of informed consent, if the subjects are children under the age of 15 outside of an institutional framework and without parental consent, if the research exposes research subjects to exceptionally

strong stimuli and if evaluating any possible harm requires special expertise, or if participating in the research may cause long-term mental harm, or represent a security risk to subjects. From https://www.tuni.fi/en/research/responsible-research/ethical-reviews-in-human-sciences?navref=search-result#show-does-my-study-require-an-ethical-review--id1900 [last accessed 21.10.2020].

8 Many have criticized the idea of bare life, a life in its pure biological form without political existence, in that it denies the political subjectivity of those to whom it is applied (e.g. Butler & Spivak 2007, Owens 2009; Sigona 2015), but here it is important to remember that, for Agamben, it is a figure of political ontology of biopolitical governance that can be exploited by the sovereign (Agamben 1998: 182; see also Abbott 2012). Agamben's phrasing of his ideas with sometimes excessive generalizations should also be considered in the framework of political ontology rather than its being regarded as descriptions of how the world ontically is (Abbott 2012). Agamben has also been called out for being blind to the gendered dimension of legal abandonment (see Pratt 2005) and, for example, his accounts of camps and refugees have been blamed for being generalizing and even romanticizing (see Tyler 2006). Nevertheless, to blame him for denying the political agency of those who dwell in the camps and are thus reduced to bare life, is to confuse his ontological structures of power and governance with the ontic reality. In Agamben's own words: "I work with paradigms. A paradigm is something like an example, an exemplar, a historically singular phenomenon. As it was with the panopticon for Foucault, so is the Homo Sacer or the Muselmann or the state of exception for me. And then I use this paradigm to construct a large group of phenomena and in order to understand an historical structure, again analogous with Foucault, who developed his 'panopticism' from the panopticon. But this kind of analysis should not be confused with a sociological investigation" (Agamben in Raulff 2004: 610).

9 Agamben defines sovereign in line with the German jurist and political theorist Carl Schmitt, for whom a sovereign is the one who can declare the state of exception.

10 Jewish communities did exist, of course, also in the Middle East, and they were positioned differently than the Muslim population, but they did not face similar persecution as in Europe. Ella Shohat, an Israeli Jewish scholar of Iraqi descent, has stressed that Jews in Arab countries were generally well integrated and formed an integral part of the social and cultural life there (Shohat 2017: 45). In Israel, however, their history is largely ignored, and they are instead introduced in the Zionist version of Jewish history that depicts the experiences of Jews in Europe (Shohat 2017: 43–46).

11 Other propositions for the location of the Jewish state did exist within the Zionist movement – Uganda and Argentina for example – but in the end Palestine was the most eagerly supported option, due to its historic and religious importance. In 1901, the Jewish National Fund (JNF) was founded to support Jewish emigration to the small Levantine part of the Ottoman Empire through land purchases. In *The Jewish State*, Herzl introduces in detail the political, social, and economic form of the prospective state, and even suggests that "[i]f His Majesty the Sultan were to give us Palestine [Palestine was at the time part of the Ottoman Empire], we could in return undertake to regulate the whole finances of Turkey" (Herzl 1917: 12). Herzl continued with a European colonialist tone of orientalism by pondering how "[w]e should there form a portion of a rampart of Europe against Asia, an outpost of civilization as opposed to barbarism" (Herzl 1917: 12). In accordance with settler colonial discourse on terra nullius (Fitzmaurice 2007, Veracini 2015: 62–66, Wolfe 1999: 26–27), and foreshadowing the treatment later inflicted on Palestinians, Herzl fails to acknowledge anywhere in his pamphlet the existence of the people already living in the areas on which the Jewish state was to be established.

12 The mandate era saw the implementation by the British rulers of a series of policies and laws that were seen as favoring the Jewish immigrants over the local population, along with the intensification of land purchases by Jewish agencies, which were at times either promoted or restrained by White Papers. Both of these processes created discontent, which was not dealt with in silence by the Palestinian Arab communities of Mandatory Palestine. The first uprising took place in 1929, when the Palestinian elite rejected the plan introduced by the British that would have politically disadvantaged the Palestinian residents, then approximately 90 percent of the population, and favored the Jewish

community by giving them a disproportionate standing in decision-making (Pappé 2006b: 14). The second popular insurgency took place between 1936 and 1939. Known as the Arab Revolt in Palestine, it protested, among other things, the killing of guerilla leader Izz al-Din al-Qassam and was intensified by the Peel Report calling for the partitioning of the country (Khalidi 1997, Swedenburg 2003). From the perspective of historical hindsight and the Palestinian national trajectory punctuated by Nakba, the consequences of the revolt proved to be disastrous for Palestinians. The Palestinian political leadership was arrested and exiled, which greatly weakened the resistance that Palestinians were able to organize against the Zionist forces in 1948. Information gathered on the revolt – who participated in the fighting and where the fighters were located – was an important addition to the "Village Files" put together by the Zionist information service, Shai. While providing Zionist militias with information on village structures, these files also facilitated search-and-arrest operations that helped in stalling Palestinian resistance by eliminating its most likely mobilizers (Pappé 2006b: 21–22, see also Fischbach 2011).

[13] In 1917, when the Balfour Declaration was issued, Jews constituted 10 percent of Mandate Palestine's population, whereas by 1947 the percentage had already risen to 33 percent (Zureik 2016: 9).

[14] Numbers from 'British Mandate: A Survey of Palestine'. Available at http://www.palestineremembered.com/Acre/Books/Story831.html [last accessed 21.10.2020].

15 The plan and the operational order have been published in the *Journal of Palestine Studies*, Khalidi 1988: 20–33; Appendix C: Text of Plan Dalet: Operational Orders to the Brigades 1988.

[16] A list of atrocities, massacres etc. and the methods of expulsion used in each emptied village can be found in *Atlas of Palestine*, Abu-Sitta (2010): 92–96, 108–116.

[17] The Palestinians who stayed in the areas that became the state of Israel were granted a nominal citizenship (Knesset 5712-1952). They were, nevertheless, also placed under military rule that was in force till 1966 and considerably limited their rights, for example their freedom of movement (Pappé 2011, Rabinowitz & Abu-Baker 2005, Robinson 2013). Those internally displaced who had stayed near their villages waiting for the chance to return home found themselves unable to do so as the village lands were confiscated by the state and appropriated for other uses (ibid.).

[18] This denial has been justified by, for example a claim regarding the voluntariness of Palestinians' 'exodus', and by presenting the refugee situation as a population exchange in which Arab states took in Arab Palestinians while Israel brought in Jews from Arab countries, especially from Iraq and Morocco (Pappé 2006a: 145, 175–177). A recent example of this discourse can be found in the Trump government's peace proposal ('Peace to Prosperity', pp. 31–32, see n79). The official discourse in Israel, and to some extent internationally, has been that refugees left voluntarily or were encouraged to do so by Arab states. It was claimed that Arab countries broadcast an evacuation order for Palestinian residents at the outbreak of the war, even though archival evidence has refuted such claims and instead revealed the consistent psychological warfare waged against Palestinians by the Zionist broadcasters (Cooke et al. 1988).

[19] The UNCCP continued the work of the UN-elected mediator, Count Folke Bernadotte, president of the Swedish Red Cross, who was assassinated on duty later in the same year by Zionist militants from the extremist underground organization, Lehi. His mission had been to secure the needs of the local population, to assure the protection of the holy places, and to promote a peaceful solution to the situation (A/RES/186 [S-2]).

[20] The unequal distribution of rights along ethnic lines (meaning Jewish population and Arab Palestinians). See https://www.adalah.org/en/content/view/7771 [last accessed 21.10.2020].

[21] UNRWA in Figures 2019-2020. Available at

https://www.unrwa.org/resources/about-unrwa/unrwa-figures-2019-2020 [last accessed 21.10.2020].

[22] The sectarian politics did not first emerge at the time of independence; they have a much longer history that links back to the colonial powers that have ruled in the region: the Ottomans and the

French. The political configuration reflected colonial favoritism and the modernization pursuits of the Ottoman Empire, as well as the communal balances and power divisions in Mount Lebanon, before the State of Greater Lebanon was created by the French in 1920 (see Makdisi 2000, Salibi 1988).

[23] The transcription of the Cairo Agreement is available from the Palestinian Refugee ResearchNet: http://prrn.mcgill.ca/research/papers/brynen2_09.htm [last accessed 21.10.2020].

[24] The relocation of both the PLO leadership and its fighters and a number of Palestinian civilians from Jordan to Lebanon was an outcome of the brief civil war between Palestinian forces and the Hashemite rulers of Jordan in 1970, known as Black September.

[25] "Israeli vulture detained in Lebanon on suspicion of being a spy", CNN 28 January 2016 http://edition.cnn.com/2016/01/27/middleeast/israel-vulture-lebanon-spy/, "Israel destroys 'spy devices' in southern Lebanon", BBC 3 July 2012 http://www.bbc.com/news/world-middle-east-18691792 [last accessed 21.10.2020].

[26] 'Protocol on the Treatment of Palestinian Refugees' ["Casablanca Protocol"], unofficial translation available at https://unispal.un.org/UNISPAL.NSF/0/E373EB5C166347AE85256E36006948BA [last accessed 21.10.2020].

[27] In the summer of 2019, the Palestinians' employment rights were, once again, on the table when the then minister of labor, Camille Abu Suleiman, started a campaign to monitor the work permits of foreign laborers. Though, according to the minister, the campaign was initiated because of the Syrians, it affected the Palestinian refugees as well, as they were also required to obtain such permits. Some Palestinians lost their jobs and their businesses were closed down due to the campaign, which resulted in demonstrations in the camps. See al-Monitor, 4 August 2019, 'Palestinians reject Lebanon's move to regulate foreign labor' at https://www.al-monitor.com/pulse/originals/2019/08/lebanon-ministry-labor-foreign-workers-palestinian-refugees.html#ixzz6BBagY1XJ [last accessed 21.10.2020].

[28] In 2016, Lebanon started to issue biometric passports to registered Palestinian refugees, http://www.general-security.gov.lb/en/posts/196 [last accessed 21.10.2020].

[29] The wall has not only hindered movement but has also seized Palestinian lands and thus isolated West Bank farmers from their fields, as the majority of the wall has been constructed on the West Bank side of the Green Line. Furthermore, for example in Qalqiliya, in northwestern West Bank, the wall has surrounded the whole city, leaving only one entrance that is controlled by an Israeli checkpoint. Similarly, several villages south of Bethlehem have been effectively cut off, as the wall, checkpoints, and settlements have isolated them from rest of the West Bank.

[30] Website on ongoing Nakba by the refugee rights organization BADIL http://www.ongoingnakba.org/en/; The Ongoing Nakba: The Forcible Displacement of the Palestinian People, 15 May 2013, Jadalliyya https://www.jadaliyya.com/Details/28629/The-Ongoing-Nakba-The-Forcible-Displacement-of-the-Palestinian-People; several articles on the blog 'Nakba Files' http://nakbafiles.org/.

[31] Declaration of Principles on Interim Self-Government Arrangements ("Oslo Agreement"), 13 September 1993, available at https://www.refworld.org/docid/3de5e96e4.html [last accessed 21.10.2020].

[32] Israeli-Palestinian Interim Agreement on the West Bank and the Gaza Strip (Oslo II), 28 September 1995, available at: https://www.refworld.org/docid/3de5ebbc0.html [last accessed 21.10.2020].

[33] This and other percentages are based on figures given by OCHA, in 'Area C' https://www.ochaopt.org/location/area-c and OCHA (2014) 'AREA C Vulnerability Profile', available at https://www.ochaopt.org/sites/default/files/ocha_opt_fact_sheet_5_3_2014_En_.pdf [last accessed 21.10.2020].

[34] The increase in the settler population was reported by Middle East Monitor on 14 September 2018 ('Report: Number of Israel settlers quadrupled since Oslo Accords', https://www.middleeastmonitor.com/20180914-report-number-of-israel-settlers-quadrupled-since-oslo-accords/). Actual statistics are from the Israeli Central Bureau of Statistics and they have been

collated by, for example, Peace Now (https://peacenow.org.il/en/population-data-in-israel-and-in-the-west-bank) and B'Tselem (https://www.btselem.org/settlements/statistics). On the settlement growth since the Oslo Accords, see also the *Palestine-Israel Journal of Politics, Economics and Culture*, 4 December 2000, 'Facts on the Ground since the Oslo Agreement, September 1993' https://www.pij.org/articles/269/facts-on-the-ground-since-the-oslo-agreement-september-1993 [last accessed 21.10.2020].

[35] The actual report by the United Nations could not be retrieved but a press release of the report can be found on the UN website, 1 August 2002, 'Report of Secretary-General on Recent Events in Jenin, Other Palestinian Cities' https://www.un.org/press/en/2002/SG2077.doc.htm [last accessed 21.10.2020].

[36] Israel has utilized house demolition as a punitive measure since the beginning of the occupation, but the extent to which demolitions have been implemented has varied. The first years of the Second Intifada saw a drastic increase in the number of houses demolished for punitive reasons. See for example the 2004 report 'Through No Fault of Their Own. Punitive House Demolitions during the al-Aqsa Intifada' by B'Tselem. Available at https://www.btselem.org/publications/summaries/200411_punitive_house_demolitions [last accessed 21.10.2020].

[37] On 9 March 1959, the Arab League passed Resolution 1547, which advised Arab states to abstain from granting Palestinian refugees citizenship, in order to support their Palestinian nationality.

[38] Israel captured the Gaza Strip and the Sinai Peninsula from Egypt, Jerusalem and the rest of the West Bank from Jordan, and the Golan Highs from Syria. Sinai was returned to Egypt following the peace agreement between the two countries in 1979, Golan and East Jerusalem were annexed to Israel's territories, and Gaza and the West Bank continue to be occupied without annexation even when in practice Israel treats the illegal settlements built on the occupied areas as part of its national sovereignty.

[39] UNRWA, Where we Work, Baqa'a camp https://www.unrwa.org/where-we-work/jordan/baqaa-camp [last accessed 21.10.2020].

[40] UNRWA, Where we Work, West Bank, Aida camp https://www.unrwa.org/where-we-work/west-bank/aida-camp [last accessed 21.10.2020].

[41] The aim of the 'Refugee Heritage' project is to obtain recognition of the history of a refugee camp and "to imagine and practice refugeeness beyond humanitarianism", see Refugee Heritage, introduction, http://www.decolonizing.ps/site/introduction-4/ [last accessed 21.10.2020].

[42] DAAR, Refugee Heritage, I. Indentification [sic], http://www.decolonizing.ps/site/i-indentification/ [last accessed 21.10.2020].

[43] See Peace Now 25 April 2019, 'Confiscation Order to Pave New Bypass Road South of Bethlehem', https://peacenow.org.il/en/al-aroub-bypass-confiscation [last accessed 21.10.2020].

[44] Settler violence is covered by, among others, the Israeli human rights organization, B'Tselem, which publishes videos and reports on the topic [see https://www.btselem.org/topic/settler_violence]. See also al-Haq [http://www.alhaq.org/advanced-search?keyword=settler+violence] and OCHA reports, e.g. Settler-related violence [https://www.ochaopt.org/page/settler-related-violence].

[45] UNRWA: Arroub camp profile, available at https://www.unrwa.org/sites/default/files/arroub_refugee_camp.pdf [last accessed 21.10.2020].

[46] In 2015, 139 Palestinians were killed in the West Bank, an increase of approximately 153 percent on the previous year when the number of casualties was 55. OCHA, data on casualties, https://www.ochaopt.org/data/casualties# [last accessed 21.10.2020].

[47] The total number of casualties is from OCHA data on casualties, https://www.ochaopt.org/data/casualties#. The number of refugees killed is from UNRWA 2015 oPt Emergency Appeal Annual Report, footnote 11, available at

https://www.unrwa.org/sites/default/files/content/resources/2015_opt_emergency_appeal_annua l_report.pdf [last accessed 21.10.2020].

[48] Electronic Intifada, 1 September 2016, 'Israeli captain: "I will make you all disabled"', https://electronicintifada.net/content/israeli-captain-i-will-make-you-all-disabled/17821 [last accessed 21.10.2020].

[49] In Lebanon, this avoidance of certain neighborhoods relates not only to the Palestinian camps. In Beirut, the southernmost suburb known as Dahiyeh (lit. the suburb), which is strongly associated with Hezbollah, forms an area usually not ventured into by those living in the Christian or Sunni neighborhoods of the city.

[50] A well-known example of identifying Palestinians from the way in which they pronounce certain words is from the civil war, when people were made to say the word tomato (the Lebanese pronounce it *banadura* whereas Palestinians say *bandura*) in order to differentiate between Lebanese and Palestinians at the checkpoints. It was nevertheless common to hear the younger generation of refugees speaking at least partly with a Lebanese accent: *eh* (yeah) instead of *ah*; *baddi* (I want) instead of *biddi*; and *ba'rifsh* (I don't know) instead of *ba'rafsh*.

[51] See MEMO, 17 January 2018, 'US withholds $65m in Palestinian aid after Trump threat' https://www.middleeastmonitor.com/20180117-us-withholds-65-mln-in-palestinian-aid-after-trump-threat/, Palestine Square, 8 January 2018, 'What Would Happen if Trump Cut UNRWA Funding?' https://palestinesquare.com/2018/01/08/what-would-happen-if-trump-cuts-unrwa-funding/ [last accessed 21.10.2020].

[52] Devex, 23 January 2018, 'European donors fast-track UNRWA funding to plug US gap' https://www.devex.com/news/european-donors-fast-track-unrwa-funding-to-plug-us-gap-91931 [last accessed 21.10.2020].

[53] Numbers from 'UNRWA in Figures – 2018-2019' report. Available at https://www.unrwa.org/resources/about-unrwa/unrwa-figures-2018-2019.

[54] Report of the Working Group on the Financing of the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East, 1999. Available at https://digitallibrary.un.org/record/299186#record-files-collapse-header [last accessed 21.10.2020].

[55] +972 Magazine, 3 August 2015, 'UNRWA funding crisis puts 500k Palestinian children at risk' https://972mag.com/unrwa-funding-crisis-puts-500k-palestinian-children-at-risk/109586/ [last accessed 21.10.2020].

[56] Palestinian Information Center, 23 May 2017, 'UNRWA: Our financial deficit in 2017 is $115 million' https://english.palinfo.com/news/2017/5/23/unrwa-our-financial-deficit-in-2017-is-115-million [last accessed 21.10.2020].

[57] Palestine News and Info Agency, 25 April 2018, 'UNRWA may stop all services starting September due to financial crisis, says spokesman' http://english.wafa.ps/page.aspx?id=EXogzba97411919550aEXogzb [last accessed 21.10.2020].

[58] The lack of quality was indicated both by the large class sizes and the underqualified teachers, both of which took a further turn for the worse in early 2020, when UNRWA fired 17 teachers in Lebanon. See Safa, 8 January 2020, '"UNRWA" tafsil 17 madrasna min madarasha b Lubnan' http://safa.ps/post/274544 [last accessed 21.10.2020].

[59] The Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan. Department of Palestinian Affairs. https://portal.jordan.gov.jo/wps/portal/Home/GovernmentEntities/Ministries/Ministry/ministry %20of%20foreign%20affairs/department%20of%20palestinian%20affairs/department%20of%20pa lestinian%20affairs?entityType=ministry&lang=en&nameEntity=Department+of+Palestinian+Affa irs [last accessed 21.10.2020].

[60] Al Jazeera, 12 June 2017, 'Israel calls for end of UN Palestinian refugee agency', https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2017/06/israeli-calls-palestinian-refugee-agency-170611214423120.html [last accessed 21.10.2020].

[61] The demonstration was specifically against administrative detention, which Israel commonly uses to detain Palestinians without legal proceedings. According to the Human Rights organization B'Tselem, administrative detention leaves the detainees helpless, "facing unknown allegations with no way to disprove them, not knowing when they will be released, and without being charged, tried or convicted". See B'Tselem, 'Administrative Detention' https://www.btselem.org/administrative_detention [last accessed 21.10.2020].

[62] UN – Academic Impact. Education For All https://academicimpact.un.org/content/education-all [last accessed 21.10.2020].

[63] Examples of such scholarship programs are the British Council HESPAL Scholarship, the Ireland-Palestine Scholarship Programme, the Said Foundation Scholarships, and the AMIDEAST programs, to mention just a few. See the following websites: https://www.britishcouncil.ps/en/study-uk/scholarships, https://www.amideast.org/west-bank-gaza/find-a-scholarship, http://www.scientists4palestine.com/category/scholarships-funding/student-funding/.

[64] The royal quota system allows students to enter university with the lower Jordanian fee, and Gazans can apply for inclusion in the camp resident quota or the Palestine embassy quota. See ARDD-Legal Aid (2015), 'Mapping the Legal Obstacles Palestinians Face in Jordan'.

[65] The World Economic Forum's 'Global Risks 2014' report even suggests that youth unemployment can create a "lost generation" that could create social unrest (p. 37, available at http://www3.weforum.org/docs/WEF_GlobalRisks_Report_2014.pdf) and the International Labour Organization's call for action warns that "[p]ersistent youth unemployment and underemployment carry very high social and economic costs and threaten the fabric of our societies" and that "[f]ailure to generate sufficient decent jobs can result in long-lasting 'scarring' effects on young people" (p. 3, available at https://www.ilo.org/ilc/ILCSessions/previous-sessions/101stSession/texts-adopted/WCMS_185950/lang--en/index.htm). [last accessed 21.10.2020].

[66] A list of different embroidery projects can be found on the website of the Palestine Costume Archive: https://palestinecostumearchive.com/refugee_camps.htm. It is not exhaustive, nor does it seem to have been updated, but it still gives an idea of the scope of such projects. Shatila Studio, on the other hand, exemplifies how the refugee women took the initiative to maintain their employment when funding for a development program ended, by converting the program into a self-sustaining business. Its work has been noticed, and has been covered in, for example, the al-Monitor article 'Why women in this Lebanese refugee camp opt for trade, not aid', 8 October 2019, https://www.al-monitor.com/pulse/originals/2019/10/syrian-palestinian-refugees-save-dying-project.html#ixzz6BCCkirbI [last accessed 21.10.2020].

[67] World Bank, 'Unemployment, youth total (% of total labor force ages 15-24) (modeled ILO estimate) – Jordan' https://data.worldbank.org/indicator/SL.UEM.1524.ZS?locations=JO [last accessed 21.10.2020].

[68] The Jordan Times, 3 November 2016, 'Gazan teachers "will not lose their jobs" in private schools' http://www.jordantimes.com/news/local/gazan-teachers-will-not-lose-their-jobs%E2%80%99-private-schools [last accessed 21.10.2020].

[69] Al Jazeera, 17 July 2019, 'Palestinians in Lebanon protest crackdown on unlicensed workers' https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2019/07/palestinians-lebanon-protest-crackdown-unlicensed-workers-190716183746729.html, https://www.npr.org/2019/07/26/745041157/in-lebanon-palestinians-protest-new-employment-restrictions?t=1571230812880 [last accessed 21.10.2020].

[70] This was the case especially before the first Gulf War, as the PLO's siding with Iraq resulted in the mass expulsion of Palestinians from Kuwait and thus produced a sharp decline in remittances (al-Aza'r 2004, Peteet 1996, Shiblak 1996).

[71] An English translation of the key findings of the census can be found on the Lebanese government's website: http://www.lpdc.gov.lb/DocumentFiles/Key%20Findings%20report%20En-636566196639789418.pdf [last accessed 21.10.2020].

72   Daily   Star,   18   November   2016,   'Biometric   documents   for   Palestinians' http://www.dailystar.com.lb/News/Lebanon-News/2016/Nov-18/381825-biometric-documents-for-palestinians.ashx [last accessed 21.10.2020].

73 In reality, marrying a Jerusalemite Palestinian is not an easy matter even for those in occupied Palestine, due to Israel's discriminatory ID policies. Those holding a blue Jerusalem ID cannot pass the Jerusalem residency permit on to spouses who hold, for example, a green West Bank ID, which in practice forces such couples to settle outside Jerusalem's municipal borders. This places those with a Jerusalem ID at risk of losing it as their "center of life" is outside Jerusalem. See Human Rights Watch, 8 August 2017, 'Israel: Jerusalem Palestinians Stripped of Status. Discriminatory Residency Revocations', at https://www.hrw.org/news/2017/08/08/israel-jerusalem-palestinians-stripped-status [last accessed 21.10.2020].

74 Telling of the importance of children is not only the fact that they are well loved but that not being able to have them is considered a sound reason for a man to divorce his wife.

75 This misconception might have resulted from the fact that, under Jordanian rule, West Bankers were not allowed to carry guns, making them unable to put up any resistance when Israel occupied the area in 1967. See Hawa Tawil 1983: 75–78, 84–87.

76 Organizations that have initiated such discussions include, BADIL Resource Center for Palestinian Residency and Refugee Rights, Zochrot, Baladna – Association for Arab Youth, and DAAR – Decolonizing Architecture Art Residency.

77 Adopting the two-state solution was already considered as abandonment among the refugees, who saw it as signaling that the Palestinian political leadership was giving up on the return, which had been at the forefront of Palestinians' political action. Furthermore, as the Palestinian Authority's mandate covered only the occupied West Bank and Gaza Strip, with Palestinians living in exile and inside the 1948 borders not having even the right to vote in the Palestinian National Authority elections, both the refugees and the internally displaced Palestinians living within the 1948 borders have organized themselves to advocate for their right (tellingly, the name of the most important refugee rights organization is BADIL, Arabic for alternative).

78 In the autumn of 2015, when I was doing fieldwork in Lebanon, a series of knife attacks, mainly against Israeli soldiers, took place in Jerusalem and the West Bank, and these events were at times referred to as an *intidafa*. However, whereas in Lebanon my interlocutors readily called it *Intifada al-Quds* (Jerusalem Intifada) or *Intifada as-Sukkineh* (Knife Intifada) and welcomed it as showing that Palestinians were still dedicated to resistance, in the West Bank my interlocutors were more reserved. Few were ready to call the events an intifada but rather referred to them as an "individual outburst of anger and frustration", which nevertheless had direct consequences for their daily life (demonstrations, teargas, gunfire, arrests, closures, and mourning of those who carried out the attacks since, as a rule, they were shot and killed).

79 A recent example is the Trump government's proposal of a solution, published on 28 January 2020, that would allow Israel to maintain its settlements in the West Bank as well as the whole of the Jordan Valley, while a Palestinian state would be established on the bits and pieces of land that were left. The proposal, basically, gives its blessing to the status quo. It further openly states that "there shall be no right of return by, or absorption of, any Palestinian refugee into the State of Israel" ('Peace to Prosperity', p. 32). Available at https://www.whitehouse.gov/wp-content/uploads/2020/01/Peace-to-Prosperity-0120.pdf [last accessed 21.10.2020].

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