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BETWEEN POLICY AND PRACTICE
An Analysis of Refugee Agency and Governance in
Protracted Refugee Situations

Faculty of Social Sciences
Master's Thesis
April 2024

ABSTRACT

Sabeth Kessler: Between Policy and Practice: An Analysis of Refugee Agency and Governance in Protracted Refugee Situations
Master's Thesis
Tampere University
Master's Degree Programme in Peace, Mediation, and Conflict Research
April 2024

Refugee camps are frequently conceptualized as spaces in which social and political life is reduced to biological concerns of survival or bare life. Refugees themselves, on the other hand, are often portrayed either as voiceless victims in need of help or as a threat to the nation-state and international order. Less often, however, they are seen as “normal” human beings concerned with their lives and situations or as active agents pursuing certain objectives.

Drawing upon Za’atari, the largest Syrian refugee camp in Jordan, this thesis critically examines the agency of displaced persons in protracted refugee situations. It explores the opportunities available to, and restrictions imposed on, displaced people to take initiative and actively participate in shaping their present and future lives. Using agency as a theoretical framework, different forms of agency are examined, including overt and covert forms, such as rejection, assimilation, bypassing, and manipulation, as well as their persistence in small-scale actions and under constrained conditions. Moreover, this thesis analyzes the structural and contextual factors that may restrict or enable mobilization and agency, including legal, political, and institutional constraints. In this context, the interaction between international frameworks and actors and national regulations and actors is also discussed.

The thesis is divided into three main parts. The first part explores the concept of agency and provides insight into the international and national frameworks that affect the context of the Za’atari refugee camp. It also discusses how these frameworks strengthen and hinder refugees’ efforts to become active agents, paying particular attention to the role of UNHCR. The second part analyzes the implementation of these frameworks in practice and discusses the extent to which the UNHCR and Jordanian stakeholders comply with international standards and laws, pointing to dichotomies between policies and their implementations as well as violations of basic human rights. Finally, it examines how refugees manage to overcome restrictions and obstacles to mobilize and take an active role in shaping their lives and broader processes, and what political and ethical implications the findings have for the governance of refugees.

Keywords: Agency, Dichotomy, Forced Migration, Jordan, Participation, Policy Implementation, Protracted Refugee Situations, Self-Reliance, Syrian Refugees, UNHCR, Za’atari Refugee Camp

Acknowledgments

I would like to thank everyone who has contributed to the completion of this Master's thesis and supported me throughout the process. I am grateful to all those who have encouraged me to think critically, made me question common beliefs, inequalities, and double standards, and made me more aware of my own privileges.

I would like to thank my supervisor Anitta Kynsilehto for her advice and comments, for her support, encouragement, and guidance, and for her patience and willingness to make this study possible, even though it went beyond the initial time and page limits. I appreciate the time you have devoted to mentoring this process and guiding my research along the way while encouraging my own approaches to the topic. I would also like to thank Bruno Lefort, who provided many insightful and constructive comments and additional reading recommendations that helped with the final changes to this thesis and pointed me to critical lines of thought and ideas for further research.

I am thankful to my fellow students for brainstorming, exchanging ideas, and sharing their thoughts and thereby encouraging me to adopt new ways of thinking. I am incredibly grateful to my friends for their love and support. For their valuable input and moments of distraction from my thesis. For reminding me to enjoy life and get outside on a sunny day, and for believing in me in moments of doubt and frustration.

I want to thank my family, especially my parents, for their unwavering support and patience. For keeping me going in times of challenge and self-doubt. For their advice and their understanding. For their love and for taking my mind off my thesis and study-related topics for a while. And for their immense support with everything, their open ears, reassurance, and advice.

I am truly grateful that I have been able to spend the last few years in Finland, surrounded not only by wonderful people but also by peaceful serene nature, providing me with the perfect respite from my studies.

Completing this thesis has sometimes felt like a never-ending process and I am grateful that I was able to dedicate myself to this research, to interact with others interested in the topic, and for all the support along the way, without which this thesis would have not come together.

Thank you again to everyone who has contributed to this process, whether from afar or close by. Thank you to all those who have shared their knowledge, provided insight, and gifted me some of their time. I am very grateful to my professors, fellow students, friends, and family for their contribution to this thesis and for supporting me along the way.

Disclaimer

The numerical data presented in this thesis is derived from information provided by international organizations and agencies involved in monitoring refugee crises. It is important to note that official statistics may vary significantly. Several factors contribute to the discrepancies, including but not limited to instructions given to organizations like the UNHCR to halt the counting of refugees in the initial years of a crisis, the intricate nature of refugee situations, and challenges in accurately counting (re-)entering refugees. Consequently, the figures should be interpreted with awareness of the complexities and limitations in obtaining precise and consistent data in the field of refugee studies.

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List of Abbreviations

3RP	Regional Refugee and Resilience Plan
ARRD-LA	Arab Renaissance for Democracy and Development – Legal Aid Centre
CRRF	Comprehensive Refugee Response Framework
DRC	Danish Refugee Council
IHD	Integral Human Development
GCM	Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration
GCR	Global Compact on Refugees
GoJ	Government of Jordan
HRBA	Human rights-based approach
IGO	Intergovernmental Organization
ILO	International Labor Organization
INGO	International Non-Governmental Organization
IOM	International Organization for Migration
IRC	International Rescue Committee
JIPS	Joint Internal Displacement Profiling Service
JNCW	Jordanian National Commission for Women
ISWG	Inter-Sector Working Group Jordan
JRP	Jordan Response Plan for the Syria Crisis
MOPIC	Ministry of Planning and International Cooperation (Jordan)
MOI	Ministry of Interior (Jordan)
MoU	Memorandum of Understanding (referring to the Memorandum of Understanding between UNHCR and the Jordanian Government)
MSMEs	Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises
NGO	Non-governmental Organization
OECD	Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development
P4P	Partnership for Prospects Program
PSD	Public Security Directorate
PSEA	Protection from Sexual Exploitation and Abuse

RRP	Regional Refugee Response Plan
SDGs	Sustainable Development Goals
SFCC	Syrian Family Clan Council
SGBV	Sexual and Gender-based Violence
SRAD	Syrian Refugee Affairs Directorate
Stats4SD	Statistics for Sustainable Development
UN	United Nations
UN DESA	United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs
UNHCR	United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees
WFP	UN World Food Program
WHO	World Health Organization

1 Introduction

1.1 Background of the Study

Around the world, negative narratives about displaced populations persist. Rhetoric including that refugees steal the benefits of people living in the Global North are widespread (Nyers, 1998). Even when not seen as thieves of social benefits, refugees are generally given simplified, predefined roles in public discourses which do not grant them much agency but rather victimize them and deny them active participation in society. Thus, images, rhetoric, and assumptions about refugees as powerless, vulnerable victims and “speechless emissaries” persist (Bradley et al., 2019; Malkki, 1996). This sort of labeling silences those classified as refugees and has furthermore led to the construction of a presumably “good” and “bad” refugee as well as of the expected “ideal” behavior of displaced populations, who must be vulnerable and innocent people in order to be worthy of international aid (Omata, 2017). Those on the other hand, who contradict this image of the passive and voiceless refugees, those who utter their perspective, who are vocal about their concerns and needs, are oftentimes viewed as disruptive and threats not only to the host society but to the international order and community. However, ignoring that displaced populations are “ordinary people”, and political beings is highly problematic. This common perception reduces refugees to a limited identity of silenced and disempowered bare life (Agamben, 1998).

Like displaced populations, refugee camps are oftentimes seen as the product of anomaly and “exceptionality” (Agamben, 1998; Turner, 2015). They are what Agamben (1998) calls “exceptional spaces” which can solely fulfill a temporary emergency protection function, but cannot fulfill permanent protection needs and therefore, need long-term solutions themselves (Omata, 2017; Turner, 2015). This is also due to the fact that refugee camps may cause harm in the longer term, by creating an extra-territorial space which is simultaneously excluded from and included into host societies. Thus, refugee camps are legally and spatially excluded, thereby suspending their inhabitants’ human rights, while simultaneously being defined and contained by the host society, thereby suspending their inhabitants’ freedom (Jamal, 2003; Turner, 2015). They become extra-legal spaces of liminality where regular laws cease to apply, where inhabitants rarely benefit from the rights they are legally entitled to, and where law is, on the contrary, often used by those in charge to oppress camp inhabitants (Olivius, 2017; Purkey, 2013).

As a consequence, fear, insecurity, and dependence are widespread, and discourage the camps’ inhabitants from uttering their concerns and challenging their living conditions (Olivius, 2017). This becomes particularly problematic when considering that increasing numbers of refugee situations

develop into protracted refugee situations, which are defined as at least 25,000 refugees from the same country living in exile for more than five executive years (UNHCR, 2016b). The UNHCR estimated that protracted refugee situations across the globe now last an estimated 26 years on average and consequently, an increasing number of refugee camps develop into large and long-term settlements (UNHCR, 2016b). It should be clear that displaced persons cannot simply be confined to a bare minimum of existence for such an extended period of time, but that people, including displaced populations, must enjoy certain instrumental rights and freedoms, comprising economic opportunities, political freedoms, social facilities, and protective security (Jamal, 2003). In this context, it should also be noted that although camp residents are frequently denied such rights and freedoms officially, they still manage to make their own decisions, take control of their lives, and challenge the social structures within the constraints of the camp (see e.g., Küçükkeles, 2022).

What is often disregarded in the Global North when talking about topics such as refugee crises or the impact of refugees is that the vast majority of contemporary refugees remain in the developing world. Generally, little attention is paid to the situation in the affected regions themselves and the impact of displaced populations on the countries neighboring the countries of conflict (Bradley, 2014). This is also the case for the MENA region which is one of the most-conflict affected regions in the world. The region is strongly impacted by the interrelated challenges of protracted crisis situations and prevailing socioeconomic, political, natural resource management and climate-related issues (IOM, 2020). Therefore, many of the states in the region are heavily dependent on overseas development assistance to meet the needs of their own citizens (Loescher et al, 2007). Despite these challenges, the region hosted a total of 16 million forcibly displaced and stateless people by the end of 2021, representing nearly 17 per cent of UNHCR's global population of concern, which posed a significant burden to many of the host countries (UNHCR, 2022b).

However, the focus still often remains on the Global North. The public, but also politicians and the media extensively talk about the issues at the European borders and on the distribution of displaced people among European states, as well as the negative impacts of refugees on social coherence, the economy and other issues such as integration, provision of housing and cultural differences faced by the Global North. Thereby, they further ignore the situation in the affected regions and the impact of protracted situations on both the host societies, but especially on the affected populations. Thus, much of the tragedy of the forever refugee has been and continues to be invisible and attention has rather focused on high-profile and highly politicized situations, while less attention has been given to protracted situations in which refugees are moving in no direction and have been trapped in long-term camps and settlements (Crisp, 2009; Dogon, 2021). However, growing evidence of the negative

consequences of such long-term situations, including increased likelihood of exploitation, criminality, radicalization, and engagement in negative survival strategies, as well as the interconnectedness of refugees with other international concerns, including peace, security, and stability, have been emphasized (Crisp, 2009).

Thus, in recent years, international organizations, including the UN, have acknowledged these issues as well as the importance of active participation of those affected by such situations. Shifting away from the common view of refugees as passive victims is seen as crucial in counteracting negative developments and fostering positive change. It has been agreed that those whose everyday life is inherently shaped by certain policies should have an active say and their views should be considered in the design and implementation of strategies. Hence, international norms and standards that have emerged in recent decades often call for the active engagement and participation of refugees and IDPs in refugee assistance, camp management, peacebuilding, and efforts to resolve displacement.

Nevertheless, negative practices, such as warehousing refugees in camps, continue alongside assumptions that active agency of refugees could potentially lead to domestic and regional instability (Bradley, 2014; Loescher et al., 2007). Therefore, calls for participation and emphasis of the (positive) impact displaced populations can have, oftentimes remain disregarded or limited due to security concerns as well as a belief in the superiority of the Global North's ideas and processes (Olivius, 2017). Even though many international organizations have now included the active involvement of affected communities in their guidelines and regulations, much critique has been uttered in regard to the lack of implementation and incorporation of feedback from the affected people.

However, in general, the dichotomies between official regulations and the situation on the ground are little noticed and talked about. Moreover, little light is shed on the consequences and issues experienced by those most directly affected by protracted refugee situations, and they are seldom involved in project planning and implementation. This is closely related to the fact that refugee voices are oftentimes ignored and downplayed despite the importance of their concerns, needs, potential and role for a comprehensive approach, more effective and sustainable peacebuilding, and long-term solutions to protracted refugee situations. Moreover, wider regional dynamics and regulations need to be considered and analyzed for their potentially supporting or undermining impact on peacebuilding processes and the achievement of sustainable solutions (Loescher et al., 2007). Incorporating those most affected by certain regulations would also help to shed light on the potential dichotomies and injustices refugees encounter, as well as on the dehumanizing ways refugees are often treated with. This would further highlight the discrepancies between officially provided and

believed standards, frameworks, and procedures, and their actual realization on the ground, including not only universal human and refugee rights, but also programs and approaches related to refugee situations.

Therefore, my thesis aims to examine these issues and dichotomies in the context of protracted refugee situations and in particular, in Za'atari refugee camp in Jordan. I examine how government and UNHCR policies, humanitarian aid practices, and forms of refugee mobilization and organization shape refugees' opportunities for participation in a refugee camp context and particularly question the authenticity of the extensive promotion for refugee participation by policymakers and aid agencies. Furthermore, I look at the ways refugees may use and subvert these mechanisms to resist and reshape the conditions of the camp and pursue their own political agendas. With this I emphasize the importance of acknowledging the refugees' agency, their capabilities, and their involvement in processes regarding their lives. Moreover, it is my concern to point out the contradictions between the policies and their implementation and to take a critical perspective on international aid organizations, UNHCR as well as national actors which aim to deprive refugees of their agency through dehumanizing practices and treatments.

1.2 Objectives and Research Questions

The following thesis focuses on the agency of displaced populations in protracted refugee situations. It analyzes the opportunities available to and restrictions imposed on displaced populations to take initiative and actively participate in shaping their current and future lives. For this research, I applied a broad understanding of agency, not only considering its utterance through formal participation for example through the formation of political associations or community-based organizations, but also looking beyond the most visible activities and taking into account a variety of practices through which displaced populations use their agency and ensure authentic participation to assess their situations, improve their circumstances and impact wider processes.

To provide a better understanding of these diverse forms of agency and participation of displaced populations, I analyzed structural and contextual factors which may constrain or enable the mobilization and organization of displaced people. While socio-economic and cultural factors play a significant role, the focus of my thesis is on the legal, political, and institutional constraints. Thus, I analyzed the interrelationship between international and national regulations, as well as the role of UNHCR and national actors and pointed out the subsequent possibilities available to and restrictions imposed on displaced populations to become active agents.

Throughout my thesis, I was guided by a number of research questions:

1. How do refugees politically mobilize to affect their current situations, peacebuilding, and displacement resolution processes?
2. How might the law strengthen or hinder refugees' effort to become active agents?
3. What is the role of UNHCR, and how does it hinder or support refugees' agency, their involvement and activism?

Beyond considering official guidelines, regulations, and laws on paper, I also analyzed how they are applied and implemented in practice. Thus, I analyzed the regulations' degree of implementation as well as their impact on the situation on the ground and for the affected populations. I was particularly interested in UNHCR's and Jordan's compliance with international and national standards and laws, possible dichotomies between formal regulations and their implementation, as well as violations of basic human rights. Hereby, I was also interested in analyzing how displaced populations find ways to overcome these obstacles, work around inconsistencies, and shape their own lives, futures, and broader processes despite these constraints and limitations. In this context, I defined two further research questions which guided my research:

4. What are the dichotomies between official UNHCR and national guidelines and their implementation on the ground?
5. How do displaced populations manage to surpass restrictions and obstacles and manage to take an active role in shaping their current and future situations, including not only everyday concerns, but also larger processes?

1.3 Structure of the Study

The remainder of this chapter provides an initial background to the specificities of the Syrian conflict, Jordan as a host state and Za'atari refugee camp. Following this, the thesis continues with a literature review, locating my thesis within the wider field of peace research and migration and refugee studies, and more specifically their interconnectedness. Moreover, the literature review provides insight into the terminology of this thesis, including a discussion on forced displacement, protracted refugee situations, refugee camps and agency. Thereafter, the theoretical framework discusses the general lens adapted throughout the thesis and introduces both, a decolonial feminist and intersectional approach and an everyday approach. The last section of the theoretical framework focuses on the concept of agency and its application throughout my thesis. The subsequent chapter outlines the methodological approaches to the topic, including a combined methodology of policy

implementation research and policy process analysis, the data collection process, the methods used to analyze the data as well as the limitations of the chosen methodology. A chapter discussing the international and national actors, frameworks, and laws, as well as approaches to empowerment and agency, ensues and not only gives an overview of existing regulations but also discusses the state of their applicability and implementation in the Jordanian context. Next is a chapter on the situation within Za'atari camp, outlining its structures and legalities as well as providing insight into the living situations of its inhabitants, their rights, and possibilities for agency. After this discussion, further results and an analysis of the specific programs being implemented in regard to refugee empowerment are presented to discuss the compatibility of international and national law and to analyze the implementation of these frameworks in the Jordanian context. This also provides answers to the research questions and thus, focuses on the ways the law may strengthen or hinder refugees' efforts to become active agents (2), the role of the UNHCR in regard to refugee agency (3), the dichotomies between official UNHCR and national guideline and their implementation on the ground (4) as well as refugees' possibilities for the exercise of agency (1 & 5). Moreover, the chapter outlines political and ethical implications for the governance of refugees. The last chapter of this thesis includes some concluding remarks, summarizes the main insights of the study, provides a short evaluation of the research, and points to remaining questions and potential future research.

1.4 Background to the Case Study

As mentioned above, the MENA region is one of the most conflict-affected regions in the world and characterized by a number of challenges connected to protracted crisis and refugee situations, prevalent socioeconomic and political issues as well as concerns related to natural resources and climate change (IOM, 2020). Given this simultaneity of challenges, and the substantial number of displaced people living in the region, it plays a crucial role in the implementation of international refugee regulations and has led to the establishment of a number of new frameworks and approaches to meet the needs of both host societies and refugees, and to overcome the challenges related to protracted situations. As discussed in more detail below, the Syrian conflict which started in 2011, has had major consequences not only for Syrians themselves but also the international community, European countries, and foremost Syria's neighboring countries and those fleeing the violence. Jordan and Lebanon in particular, have taken on a lot of responsibility, hosted large numbers of Syrian refugees and played a significant role in accommodating and providing aid to those affected by the war. Given the local context of the two countries, in particular the precarious political situation, ongoing corruption, sectarian divisions and overall unstable systems in Lebanon, as well as the aim

of this thesis to analyze the implementation of frameworks, it was decided to focus on Jordan and displaced Syrians in Za'atari refugee camp as it appeared to be the more viable and auspicious choice.

1.4.1 The Syrian Conflict

The Syrian crisis is considered the largest and most protracted humanitarian disaster of the twenty-first century (see GoJ 2020; ILO, 2015b; Wardeh & Marques, 2023). The Syrian civil war, which is causing this tremendous crisis, has its origin in the so-called Arab uprisings of 2011. The Arab uprisings, which started in Tunisia and then quickly spread across the MENA region, challenged long-standing, often corrupt regimes and demanded their countries' leaders to step down and provide space for economic and political reforms (Bank & Fröhlich, 2021; Zuber & Moussa, 2018).

Protests in Southern Syria started in March 2011 and quickly spread across the country. The protesters demonstrated against the rule of President Bashar al-Assad, who had governed Syria since 2000, and whose regime they saw as responsible for widespread socio-economic problems, including high unemployment rates. Moreover, they demanded the release of political prisoners, the end of the state of emergency, greater freedoms, and an end to corruption (Laub, 2023). The government responded with brutal force against the unarmed protesters, using violence, mass arrests, and torture, killing and imprisoning hundreds (Al Jazeera, 2018; Laub, 2023). In July 2011, the Free Syrian Army, a rebel group of military defectors, was established with the goal to end Assad's rule (Al Jazeera, 2018). However, despite drifting into a civil war, the regime persisted. In the following months, the international community undertook several diplomatic efforts and spoke out about humanitarian concerns but remained divided on concrete actions towards Syria and a potential military intervention. Over the following years, the civil war further escalated, partially due to the support and funding of several rival countries and their interests in the outcome of the conflict. Today, the country continues to be in conflict and divided by opposing actors and interests as well as marked by political and economic instability with little hope for any substantial political change (Laub, 2023). In addition to hundreds of thousands of deaths, the conflict continues to be the cause of the world's largest refugee crisis (UN, 2020). Nearly 13 million people, more than half of Syria's prewar population of about 22 million, have been displaced internally and across borders (Bank & Fröhlich, 2021; Laub, 2023).

Internationally, the focus has been on the so-called European refugee crisis of 2015, when approximately one million refugees, including Syrians, arrived in Europe, and prompted European states to call for stricter controls at the EU's external borders and the restraint of refugees in their region (Burlin, 2019). However, the majority of Syrian refugees, over 6.8 million, fled to neighboring countries in particular Türkiye, which hosts more than three million Syrian refugees, Lebanon, a

country of just over 5 million people hosting more than eight hundred thousand Syrians,¹ Jordan, being host to more than half a million Syrian refugees as well as Egypt and Iraq (3RP, 2023; Betts et al., 2017; Laub, 2023). Thus, the Syrian civil war, and in particular Syrian refugees, who are now the largest refugee group in the MENA region, have posed significant challenges to the region and host communities which are affected by an array of socio-economic and other challenges, including economic deprivation, reduced revenues, increased poverty levels, inadequate access to information and public services, as well as a deterioration of social cohesion (ILO, 2015b; UN, 2020). These increasing challenges, as well as increasing security concerns, are also the reason why the neighboring countries, despite an initial welcoming response, have turned to more restrictive border and refugee policies from late 2014 onwards and demanded more international support (Betts et al., 2017).

1.4.2 Jordan as a Host State

Jordan, a small, middle-income, and resource poor country in the Middle East located between Israel and Iraq, bordering Saudi Arabia in the South-East, and sharing a 348-kilometer land border with Syria in the North, has a population of approximately 10.8 million people. The country is an ex-British mandate, independent since 1946 and a parliamentary constitutional monarchy (IHD, n.d.). It is considered the smallest economy of the region and is marked by a scarcity of resources. Furthermore, it is heavily dependent on imports and foreign aid as well as sensitive towards sudden demographic changes (Dalal, 2015; IHD, n.d.). The country's economy has stagnated since 2007 and has experienced major challenges, including high unemployment rates, low wages, and a large informal labor market, with around 44 per cent of economic activities taking place informally (Dalal, 2015; Gordon, 2017; ILO, 2015a).

Jordan is also one of the major refugee host countries of first asylum and has received millions of refugees for more than a century. In particular, Jordan has played a significant role in receiving hundreds of thousands of Palestinian refugees who fled the 1948 Arab Israeli War in the context of the establishment of Israel and the 1967 Six-Day War, when Israel conquered the West Bank and the Gaza Strip. Most of the Palestinian refugees in Jordan reside in cities and villages alongside Jordanians and the country has granted most of them full-fledged citizenship and associated rights, including access to the labor market, public health care and education services. Jordan's experience with Palestinian refugees and the unresolved Palestinian cause in particular, has significantly

¹ The real number of Syrian refugees in Lebanon is much higher and has been estimated to be around 1.5 million. The number stated here is the official number of registered Syrian refugees with UNHCR. However, on the Lebanese government's request, UNHCR had to stop registering Syrian refugees already in 2015, and hence, many of Syrians in Lebanon do not have formal refugee status or legal residency.

impacted Jordan's socio-economic conditions and political dynamics as well as the country's migration and refugee policies. Moreover, it has led to Jordan taking a vital role in regional and international efforts to reach a diplomatic and lasting solution to the Palestinian question. This is closely linked to concerns that Jordan could be seen as an alternative homeland for Palestinians, which would challenge Palestinians' right of return and further exacerbate domestic tensions over limited resources, economic opportunities, and other existential concerns in Jordan (Bauer, 2022). Like other Arab countries in the region that host significant numbers of Palestinian refugees, Jordan has therefore not adopted the 1951 Refugee Convention or other international standards for refugees (Chatelard, 2002). Furthermore, the country has neither established a comprehensive national framework for the treatment or accommodation of refugees nor a legal definition of asylum (Chatelard, 2002).

Today, Jordan hosts around three million registered refugees, among them around 2.3 million Palestinians, 12,900 Yemenis, 6,000 Sudanese and 34,000 Iraqis (WFB, 2023). Therefore, Jordan not only hosts the largest number of Palestinian refugees in the world, but also has the second highest refugees-to-population ratio globally (3RP, 2023; Burlin, 2019; ILO, 2015a). Moreover, around 661,000 Syrian refugees are registered with the UNHCR in Jordan. However, estimates suggest that the actual number might be as high as 1.3 million of which approximately 80 per cent live in host communities, while 20 per cent reside in refugee camps (see 3RP, 2023; Pasha, 2021b; Tsourapas, 2022; Wardeh & Marques, 2023). These estimates represent nearly 15 per cent of Jordan's population, making Jordan the second largest host country for Syrian refugees per capita in the world after Lebanon (UN, 2020). However, the Jordanian government does not refer to them as refugees but considers them temporary guests who have limited access to health services and public schools and often face numerous problems, such as being blamed for high unemployment rates and inflation (Tsourapas, 2022).

Prior to the Syrian conflict, Jordan and Syria maintained stable relations, not only because of their cultural and historical bonds, but also due to trade relations and a bilateral labor agreement that allowed workers from both countries to cross the border freely without visas, even if their right to work was partially restricted (ILO, 2015a; Tsourapas, 2022).

At the beginning of the Syrian crisis, Jordan itself was struggling with multiple socio-economic issues, including high unemployment rates as well as dwindling natural resources, causing protest amongst its own citizens (Pasha, 2020). Nevertheless, the country, known for its open border policy and naturalization of refugees in the past, adopted a tolerant open-door policy when Syrian refugees began seeking refuge in Jordan in March 2011, and while their right to work was severely restricted,

they were allowed to self-settle until July 2012 (Tsourapas, 2022). This tolerant policy, however, did not apply to all refugees, restrictions applied to Palestinians and Iraqis that had lived in Syria, who were often deported and have not been allowed to enter Jordan from Syria since October 2012 (De Bel-Air, 2016; Tsourapas, 2022). Furthermore, from July 2012 onwards, while Syrians were still allowed entrance, Jordan started implementing an encampment policy, both to increase international visibility, but also to avoid further integration (Wardeh & Marquez, 2023). This restrictive trend continued as the government became progressively more concerned about security matters, the risks of conflict spillovers as well as the prolonged presence of Syrian refugees and their impact on the country's demographic composition and identity, leading to the implementation of further restrictions and constrictive policies (Betts et al., 2017; Yahya et al., 2018).

Thus, despite no official change in its policy, Jordan started restricting the entry of Syrian refugees at the borders as well as their movement within the country. While Jordan already limited the entry of Syrian refugees to three hundred per day in the first four months of 2013, all borders in western Jordan were completely closed for regular Syrian refugees as of June 2013, leaving them stranded on the Syrian side of the border (Betts et al., 2017; Tsourapas, 2022). In addition, restrictive policies affecting employment, movement, access to healthcare and education were imposed on those already residing in Jordan, and the Syrian Refugee Affairs Directorate (SRAD) was established and tasked with policing Syrian refugees, in particular with controlling the exit and entry of Syrian refugee camps (Betts et al., 2017; Yahya et al., 2018). Moreover, development challenges, as well as increasing concerns about social cohesion, led to an end of the "bail-out" scheme which had allowed those previously residing in camps to legally leave and establish themselves in host communities (Pasha, 2020). Due to mounting security concerns following the rise of extremist groups, particularly ISIS, and their violent attacks in Syria, restrictions became even more restrictive beginning in 2014, leading to the suspension of registrations, and eventually the complete closure of all Jordanian Syrian borders and blatant examples of refoulement, despite the deteriorating situation in Syria (Betts et al., 2017; Yahya et al., 2018). For instance, in the spring of 2016, mass repatriations of up to four hundred registered refugees per month were reported (Burlin, 2019).

These developments were also linked to growing concerns about the economy, which was characterized by low productivity, rising unemployment rates, especially female and youth unemployment, which reached around 30 per cent each, low wages, and poor working conditions (Mencutek & Nashwan, 2021). Thus, already existing economic, financial, and infrastructural issues were further exacerbated by the influx of large numbers of Syrian refugees, who not only competed for jobs, but also put pressure on the country's resources and public services (ILO, 2015b; Yahya et

al., 2018). This negatively impacted wage levels and working conditions and resulted in a growing informal labor market, an increase in child labor and overburdened health, education, and justice systems (GoJ, 2020; Gordon, 2017; ILO, 2015b). These pressures further troubled the government and civil society in terms of the country's social cohesion. Furthermore, the socio-political and economic impact of refugees led to growing tensions as well as discrimination and scapegoating of refugees, who were increasingly often described as a threat to the country's stability (Gordon, 2017; Mencutek & Nashwan, 2021; Pasha, 2021a).

In order to cope with the high numbers of refugees, their needs, and their impact on the national development, the Jordanian government called for the introduction of stricter burden-sharing mechanisms as well as more international support (Burlin, 2019). In this regard, it has been argued that Jordan has adopted a rent-seeking approach, using various strategies, such as exaggerated refugee numbers and restrictive policies to raise awareness of the refugee situation in the country and obtain more international financial assistance and other political benefits (Mencutek & Nashwan, 2021). This refugee rentierism has been at least partially successful. At the London Pledging Summit in February 2016, the so-called Jordan Compact an agreement designed to facilitate Syrian refugees' access to employment and focused on inclusive growth for both refugees and hosts, was signed between the Jordanian government and the EU (Betts et al., 2017; Wardeh & Marques, 2023). The measures contained in the compact, as well as development assistance in general, it was agreed, are necessary to improve the overall conditions for refugees, ensure their protection, promote their self-reliance, and support their integration in host countries (Mencutek & Nashwan, 2021). Despite these international efforts and the incentives proposed to Jordan, the needs of Syrian refugees continue to be only partially met, and in recent years in particular, the socio-economic impact of the COVID-19 pandemic, and more recently, the wars in Ukraine and Gaza, have severely affected their lives (3RP, 2023). Both of these, along with the effects of climate change, have exacerbated pre-existing challenges and added new ones, such as declining access to livelihood opportunities and basic services, high inflation, food insecurity, water scarcity, weak infrastructure, and generally increasing vulnerability due to a lack of access to health services, adequate shelter, and growing poverty (3RP, 2023; 3RP Joint Secretariat, 2022). Moreover, due to other crises, the focus of the international community, international organizations and other humanitarian actors has shifted in recent years, leading to a decrease in support for refugees and hosting states (3RP, 2023).

In addition to socio-economic restrictions, Jordan still does not recognize refugees under its domestic laws and continues to view them as temporary guests, contributing to an even greater vulnerability as the refugees cannot rely on any national refugee or migration policies that ensure their rights are

respected or could assist them in building a permanent life in Jordan (ILO, 2015a). Thus, beyond the challenge of adapting to their new living circumstances and dealing with the uncertainties that come with them, Syrian refugees must additionally navigate the complex and fragmented regulations that apply to them (Bank & Fröhlich, 2021; Jabbar & Zaza, 2015). Furthermore, despite UNHCR's efforts to fulfill the needs of refugees and to provide legal assistance and humanitarian aid, refugees continue experiencing elevated levels of inequality, increasing violence and insufficient access to and quality of service delivery (3RP, 2023; ILO, 2015a). Refugees have also expressed feelings of desperation and hopelessness related to a lack of agency, transparency, accountability, limited opportunities to become self-reliant and the inability to build a dignified life (Bellamy et al., 2017; Yahya et al., 2018). This is also due to the continued encampment of refugees, and the constant state of temporariness, which keeps them from settling in Jordan, but also from moving elsewhere, and hence leaves them in a state of uncertainty and indeterminate temporariness (Yahya et al., 2018; Turner, 2015).

These factors have also had a negative impact on the relations between Syrian refugees and host communities and have led to refugees being met with blame and suspicion and being seen as a burden to local communities (Yahya et al., 2018). This has also raised questions about the long-term situation of Syrian refugees, as from a current perspective the voluntary return of the majority of Syrians seems rather unlikely in the foreseeable future, and hence the search for durable solutions persists (Alnewashi, 2019).

1.4.3 Za'atari Refugee Camp

When the numbers of Syrian refugees arriving in Jordan rose at the beginning of the crisis, Jordan decided to apply a strict encampment policy and largely limited refugees' ability to exit the camps. Only through a so-called bail-out policy which required a Jordanian guarantor aged thirty-five or older, were refugees legally allowed to leave the camp and establish a home elsewhere (Yahya et al., 2018). In 2015 this policy was revoked and replaced by a new scheme, the "urban verification exercise", which obliged Syrian refugees to re-register and receive new biometric service cards from the Ministry of Interior (Yahya et al., 2018). Nonetheless, this scheme, like the old one, has been criticized as the process of obtaining such a new card is difficult and requires not only valid identity documents, but also a tenancy agreement or a UNHCR-approved residency statement, a health certificate and a copy of their landlord's identity papers (Yahya et al., 2018).

Jordan's decision to apply an encampment policy was most likely linked to both political as well as security reasons. Refugee camps, in contrast to urban settlements, were on the one hand, seen as fulfilling the basic needs of the refugees, while on the other hand, allowing for greater control,

limiting assimilation, and reducing security concerns. Moreover, putting refugees in camps rather than allowing them to settle across the country in urban areas, had, from the government's perspective, the advantage of making the refugees and the connected challenges more visible and drawing international attention to the crisis. However, in general, Syrian refugees in Jordan rejected and avoided refugee camps, and tried finding alternative settlements. Thus, only about 20 per cent of Syrian refugees in Jordan live in one of the country's three official refugee camps (Gordon, 2017). Besides Za'atari refugee camp, which is discussed more in the following, Jordan has two other refugee camps: Mrajeb Al Fhood, the so-called Emirati refugee camp, and Azraq camp which was built after Za'atari and based on lessons learnt from it regarding protests, unauthorized transformations, and political mobilization (Pasha, 2021b). Za'atari camp was built in cooperation with UNHCR in July 2012 with an initial capacity for 9,000 refugees and 1,800 tents in Mafraq governorate in the North of Jordan, close to the Syrian border. The area is remote and one of Jordan's economically least developed (Pasha, 2021b). It has often been argued that the choice of the camp's location reflects the government's securitized refugee approach of the time and the wish to avoid assimilation (Pasha 2021a, 2021b). While the camp nowadays hosts approximately 80,000 refugees, of which more than 55 per cent are children, and is the second largest refugee camp in the world, numbers of refugees have well-exceeded those numbers in previous years (Gordon, 2017; Mindset, 2022). For example, in April 2013, approximately 200,000 refugees were staying in the camp, and over the years, a total of more than 460,000 people passed through (Schön et al., 2017; Tsourapas, 2022).

As discussed in more detail in the Literature Review, refugee camps are generally seen as temporary solutions for emergency situations. In protracted refugee situations, like the one caused by the Syrian conflict, refugee camps are considered problematic and are criticized for their temporary character. Za'atari camp is no exception to this and given its initial design and structure, has been criticized for being designed like a human storage facility and site of imprisonment (Bellamy et al., 2017; Pasha, 2020). In Za'atari camp, like in other camps around the world, the dichotomy between temporariness and permanency persists and the site, being biopolitical, temporary and spatially segregated, serves as both, a site of humanitarian care as well as of containment and is an example of the challenges associated with prolonged refugee situations (Mindset, 2022; Pasha, 2021b). A clear example of the intended temporariness of the camp was the prohibition of the use of any solid building materials and the lack of electricity lines in the living areas when the camp was initially built (Pasha, 2020). The intention of the authorities was to prevent the camp from turning into a permanent settlement, and

therefore, they restricted everything that may make refugees want to stay, including all sorts of improvements and personalization of the space (Pasha, 2021a).

However, increasing numbers of refugees arriving to Za'atari from the outset of the crisis required adaptations. As mentioned above, the capacities of the camp were quickly overstretched, and the camp size increased to that of a city only months after it had been built (Dalal, 2015). This increase also led to new issues, including not only the need for more humanitarian aid but also increasing security concerns within (and outside) the camp, shortages in basic supplies, including water, food, and medicine, as well as concerns regarding privacy, sanitation, and safety, especially of women and children (Bellamy et al., 2017; Pasha, 2020). As protests and rule-breaking of the camp inhabitants rose due to their desperate situation, the UNHCR intervened in 2013, and decided to redesign the camp as well as implement new security measures (Pasha, 2020, 2021b). Thus, the camp now consisted of twelve neighborhoods with improved infrastructure, including better water and recycling systems, educational institutions, community centers and health facilities (Pasha, 2020; Schön et al., 2017; UNHCR, 2022a). In addition, security concerns were addressed by establishing a civil defense and community police operating in the camp (UNHCR, 2022a). Overall, it has been agreed that these reforms were successful and led to decreasing violence and crime, both amongst refugees and towards international aid personnel, as well as to an increased living standard for the camp inhabitants (Pasha, 2021a). Nonetheless, the reforms have, on the other hand, also been criticized for increasing Jordan's security apparatus within the camp and for implementing securitized measures which further limited the refugees' own rights, self-determination, and the space for the exercise of agency (Pasha, 2021a).

Moreover, the camp has been criticized for its isolated location and the consequences for those living within. However, while the camp was very isolated at the beginning, it is now relatively well-connected to bigger cities like Amman and Mafraq through a newly established road (Schön et al., 2017). In addition, the relationship between the camps' inhabitants and the local Jordanian population of Mafraq has developed over the years. While the refugee influx has left its strain on the local population and the governorate's infrastructure and economy, there have also been historical ties and a longstanding kinship relation between Syrians and locals, which has led to increasing acceptance (Betts et al., 2017; Wardeh & Marques, 2023). Furthermore, the presence of the refugee camp has given the governorate the opportunity to demand more economic support from the central government, and the local population has been able to establish economic ties with the camp (Wardeh & Marques, 2023). Like most camps, Za'atari also has an informal marketplace with about 780 shops whose owners have established regular interactions with the informal Jordanian economy and thereby

not only contribute to the host society and Jordan's economy, but also challenge the camp's isolation (Dalal, 2015; UNHCR, 2022a).

Nowadays, Za'atari refugee camp is often seen as a successful example of refugee entrepreneurialism, praised for its creation of economic opportunities for both, the refugee and local population, and seen as an exemplar of humanitarian innovation (Pasha, 2020; UNHCR, 2022a). The camp is commended not only for having saved thousands of lives, but also for its civic infrastructure, including its thirty schools, several health institutions, two supermarkets as well as fifty-eight community centers and their empowerment and recreational programs (Pasha, 2020). However, despite these international appraisals, Za'atari camp is by no means without issues, and refugees have complained about the lack of trust between the camp inhabitants and the camp authorities, as well as about issues related to electricity coverage and the state of the shelters (Riach & James, 2016; UNHCR, 2022a). Thus, since the camp was built as a temporary facility, many of the 24,000 shelters have deteriorated over the years and about 54 per cent of them have leaking roofs and damaged structure (UN, 2020; UNHCR, 2022a).

2 Literature Review and Key Terminology

Forced displacement is a widely studied topic, which has been researched in various fields and from different perspectives. While many scholars have thereby emphasized the capabilities and agency of refugees, others still see them as victims rather than active actors. The latter have often focused primarily on structural dynamics and institutional actors at the macro level, such as states, international organizations, and humanitarian actors, as well as economic and political interests of the Global North (Bradley et al., 2019). Thus, their research has been conducted in order to discover and analyze the outcomes of humanitarian interventions from an international perspective and according to predefined criteria and evaluation indicators. Oftentimes such research has focused on security aspects of the management and containment of displaced populations rather than the needs of displaced populations beyond their immediate physical ones, such as social, economic, and political participation (ILO, 2015a). Indeed, many of these works have either not addressed or struggled to fully understand how displaced individuals and communities are involved in and responsive to their surroundings and take active roles in shaping their lives and futures, as well as their contribution to wider processes, including peacebuilding (Bradley et al., 2019; Oskay, 2016). Furthermore, in academia, but also in governance and in the public sphere, refugees and related topics are often approached from a security perspective. Thus, many studies focus extensively on the burden refugees pose to host communities, including their impact on the economy and social cohesion, as well as security concerns for civil society and the wider international order.

Since the 1990s, however, the number of voices criticizing implicit and explicit power structures present not only on site, but also within academia, particularly in refugee studies, has been rising. This has led to a discussion on the interrelationship of structure and agency, and the ways structures shape, limit and enhance the exercise of agency, as well as how the exercise of agency may shape larger structures. Moreover, researchers in the field of refugee studies and forced displacement like Harrel-Bond (1986), as well as others from areas such as anthropology (Agier, 2002, 2011), political and social sciences (Chatty, 2010; Nyers, 1998, 2006, 2015; Perera, 2013), gender studies (Clark-Kazak, 2014; Tomlinson, 2010), law (Holzer, 2013; Purkey, 2013) and geography and urban planning (Misselwitz & Steigemann, 2009; Ramadan, 2013), have increasingly been interested in the power structures affecting the policies on and lives of displaced people residing in refugee camps, as well as the ways in which displaced individuals exercise agency (Schön et al., 2017; Oskay, 2016). Their work has led to increasing attention on the agency of displaced persons and their practices for shaping their everyday lives and exercising political, social, and economic participation. This has also resulted

in increasing criticism towards the essentializing representations of refugee experiences which ignore the myriad ways displaced populations resist and overcome their marginalization, claim rights, and mobilize against deportation, detention, discrimination, and restrictions to their basic freedoms. Authors such as Clark-Kazak, Loescher, Nyers, Perera, and Turner, for example, have published work on the agency and political participation of displaced populations within camp environments and in urban settlements all around the world. Furthermore, in 2019, Megan Bradley, James Milner and Blair Peruniak edited the book “Refugees’ Roles in Resolving Displacement and Building Peace: Beyond Beneficiaries” which analyzes where and how displaced populations contribute to interrelated political resolution processes and focuses on the agency of displaced people and their contributions to peacebuilding. It highlights not only the complex, political, socioeconomic, cultural, legal, historical, and institutional structures that influence people’s ability to exercise agency, but also the various ways in which displaced individuals and communities live with these constraints and shape the structures that condition their range of experiences and opportunities (Bradley et al., 2019).

Alongside the increasing focus on agency in migration and refugee academia, and the recognition of the active political and social role displaced individuals and communities may play, international and humanitarian actors have also increasingly focused on empowering displaced people. Measures to enhance agency were introduced and increasingly integrated into international projects and developmental humanitarian approaches. However, scholars such as Metcalfe-Hough, Fenton, and Poole (2019), Omata (2017) and Olivius (2017) have been skeptical about the extent of the actual implementation of such approaches in practice and have focused on the dichotomies of migration policy. Their work points out limitations and restrictions imposed on refugees, for example on the expression of political agency, and discloses the continuation of non-democratic approaches (Pasha, 2020). The scholars hereby emphasize how the discrepancies between policy aspirations and actual camp governance practices, and the processes in place, stand in stark contrast to both, basic human rights as well as the principles of the responsible organizations, such as the UNHCR.

As becomes clear, in recent years, the interest in refugees’ agency and participation has risen and the resilience and resourcefulness of refugees has been recognized both by the academia as well as by international actors. However, more research needs to be done in relation to refugees’ efforts to become self-sufficient and take up economic opportunities as well as on the limitations and restrictions they face throughout their displacement in regard to the exercise of political, economic, and legal agency (Crisp, 2009). Moreover, more needs to be done to shed light on the potential and possibilities that could develop if host governments and international actors would provide displaced communities with greater support, including through guarantees such as freedom of movement,

access to economic opportunities and social participation (Crisp, 2009). In addition, it remains under-researched how and why displaced communities get involved in political and social processes, as well as economic endeavors, what strategies they use, and how structural and contextual conditions constrain or enhance their mobilization and participation (Bradley et al., 2019). This is particularly the case for protracted refugee situations in countries of first asylum as much of previous research has focused on the agency and participation of refugees residing in Europe, and much less attention has been given to refugees in transit countries and countries of first asylum (Bradley et al., 2019). This is linked to an over-focus on Europe and a Eurocentric perspective in academia. Against this background, it is not surprising that although the MENA region has historically played a key role in the context of mass refugee movements, it is still largely under-researched (ILO, 2015a). In line with this, there is also a clear deficit in the analysis of Syrian refugees in Za'atari refugee camp, their economic and political empowerment, and their relationship with the law (Riach & James, 2016).

Additionally, much of the work on displaced people's participation and claims to agency, and the ways in which structural and contextual constraints may affect their participation, appears to be based solely on regional or case studies, with limited comprehensive foundational theorizing (Bradley et al., 2019). Such a theorization can, however, be useful to arrive at generalizable results that facilitate the identification of political and ethical implications for the governance of refugees. Thus, there is not only a need to expand theorizing on refugees from a narrow focus on the refugee as "stateless victim" to a broader conception of the refugee as a political actor. But also, on the relation between dominant structures and their impact (and specifically constraint) on the possibilities for refugee agency in the context of camps. For this particular reason, this thesis delves into the concept of agency, exploring its interaction with structure and its connection to empowerment. This conceptualized understanding of agency is consistently applied throughout the thesis. Agency is viewed as both an individual capacity and as significantly influenced and constrained by the structural elements within an individual's social context encompassing political, economic, historical, and cultural factors. Consequently, agency is recognized as inherently contextual. The concept of agency, its interplay with structure and the diverse types of agency are further discussed in the Theoretical Framework.

In addition, the methodology chosen for this thesis also promotes an understanding of how refugees' capacity to act is influenced by international and national legal frameworks and their state of implementation. The application of policy implementation research and policy process analysis enables a concrete inquiry of (inter)national frameworks. This enables a better understanding of the difficulties in translating explicit and implicit intentions of such frameworks into desired changes and

conditions on the ground. Consequently, such an analysis also gives insight into the resulting challenges for the refugees themselves. Hence, the chosen methodology concretely focuses on the structures in play and their effects on the exercise of refugees' agency. Moreover, given the wide range of data and the analysis of different forms of refugee agency, which includes not only economic, but also political and legal agency, this thesis provides a comprehensive perspective and focuses on the connections between structural constraints and agency, as well as the interconnections between different forms of agency, and their impact on each other. In doing so, this thesis aims to present a more holistic understanding and insight into the topic of refugee agency and the voice of displaced people, and to include the different ways in which those who are often seen as voiceless victims make claims, exercise their rights, and advocate against restrictions and for their freedoms.

Before diving into the theoretical framework with the next chapter, the following section discusses key terminology used in this thesis. It provides an overview and brief discussion of the concepts of forced displacement, protracted refugee situations, and refugee camps, as well as agency and empowerment.

2.1 Forced Displacement

The term forced displacement or forced migration is not an international legal term but is used to characterize migration movements where force, compulsion, or coercion play a significant role as driving factors, as is the case for example with migrants affected by disasters, development processes or human trafficking (IOM, 2019). However, the term is also contested, particularly in the context of ongoing discussions on the continuum of agency in any migration movement, as it potentially undermines the agency of displaced persons (IOM, 2019). Thus, while the term suggests a strict separation between voluntary and forced migration, it is increasingly argued that certain aspects and elements of both migration concepts may occur simultaneously and play a role in any migration movement (IOM, 2019). Given the lack of a legal definition, as well as the complexity of migratory movements with numerous individual circumstances, it is not surprising, that in general, terms associated with migratory movements, and especially the term forced displacement, are considered as insufficient to truly understand the conditions at play and the politics surrounding the concept. This is further enhanced by a lack of coherent definitions at the global level which leads to different understandings and applications of such concepts, depending on the specific context of host countries. This in turn leads to different legal categorizations of certain individuals and groups and thereby, to diverging eligibility for assistance (Oskay, 2016). Therefore, such legally and socially defined concepts of migration should be considered as broader spectrums which may include a variety of sub-

categories and situations. This may also prevent the exclusion of certain groups or individuals whose experience does not fit into pre-defined concepts.

The way refugees are categorized in host countries and the level of agency granted to them is closely intertwined with local perceptions of refugees. In general, displaced persons are oftentimes either labeled as pure and helpless victims or as security threats (Loescher et al., 2007; Omata, 2017; Otto & Hoffmann, 2022). The prior categorizes them as stateless recipients of aid, dependent on the goodwill of the international community and the host society. This understanding is oftentimes employed in order to raise compassion and gain support by local host communities for refugee friendly policies and to increase social cohesion amongst mixed societies, as well as to frame refugees as burdens to local societies and gain support from the international community in the form of financial aid (Nyers, 1998 & 2015; Turner, 2015). However, given their lack of citizenship, they are also perceived as lacking political status and consequently certain rights (Nyers, 1998; Pasha, 2020). Thereby, displaced persons challenge the definition of authentic political subjects and the conventional understanding of the state, especially the trinity of state-nation-territory (Nyers, 1998). Moreover, given their perception as innocent and vulnerable victims, refugees are also not expected to be politically vocal, make demands or follow their own or any agenda, but rather to be grateful and assimilate to local structures, circumstances, and norms (Omata, 2017). This is also related to the belief that due to their circumstances and flight experiences refugees have lost their own reasoning capacity and accurate judgment, political agency, influence, and power, and are solely driven by a wish to survive (Malkki, 1996; Nyers, 2006). This is further enhanced by the denial of social participation, a space for expression and meaningful actions, and economic opportunities, as well as a lack of freedom of movement, and hence, an increased dependency on the host society and international actors. This, however, denies displaced populations their capacity to make meaningful choices and decisions, as well as influence not only their individual journey and prospects, but also broader processes, including conflict resolution processes (Bradley, 2014; Bradley et al., 2019). Thus, one could say that oftentimes, displaced populations are received by host countries with the proviso that they fulfill the image of voiceless people, who no longer possess any agency, and remain silent and accept their plight. Through these expectations on how a refugee should be, an ideal type of refugee has been constructed and only if a refugee behaves in courteous manner according to these expectations and perceptions, they are perceived as being eligible for assistance and humanitarian aid (Olivius, 2017; Omata, 2017; Nyers, 2006; Turner, 2015). This perception, however, disregards the needs of displaced communities.

Depending on the context however, and in particular if displaced populations do not behave in accordance with such victimized perceptions, the latter labeling, as security threats, becomes more dominant. This perception considers displaced people as threats, perceived as not only stealing the benefits of local host societies but also as damaging local economies and the environment (Nasser-Eddin et al., 2020; Crisp, 2009). Moreover, they are often described in dehumanizing terms, labeled as parasites invading local societies and referred to in elemental and homogenizing terms such as mass or influx, denying them their individual recognition, experiences, and diversities (Msabah, 2019; Oskay, 2016). Furthermore, it is commonly assumed that displaced communities embody traditional societies in which concepts such as democracy and human rights are not widespread and values such as peace, tolerance and gender equality are not collectively practiced (Olivius, 2017). Consequently, these communities are often perceived as backward, underdeveloped and in need of education on the one hand, while on the other hand, they are viewed as potential threats to the values of host societies due to perceived resistance to local norms and customs (Olivius, 2017). Additionally, displaced populations are often seen as being prone to terrorism and crime, and hence, as dangerous for the security of the host countries and their citizens, but also the international community, and are therefore considered a global security threat (Nyers, 2006; Olivius, 2017). This labeling and securitization of refugees is oftentimes used to promote the return of refugees to their countries of origin, to justify forced remigration measures and to explain separations between local and refugee societies, such as the accommodation in refugee camps and restrictions to the exercise of human rights and freedoms (Nyers, 2006; Pasha, 2021a & 2021b; Schön et al., 2017). This is also related to the perception of refugee situations as notions of emergency and exception (discussed more in relation to refugee camps) which need solutions and correction and allows for exceptional “temporary” measures to cope with and overcome such emergencies (Agamben 1998; Nyers, 2006; Turner, 2015).

In general, these kinds of labels and othering are used in order to exclude, to produce difference and subjectivity and ultimately to justify certain measures as well as to reinforce social and political hierarchies (Nyers, 2006). Moreover, it constructs ideal types of refugees, creates dichotomies of “good” versus “bad” and thereby, produces unrealistic expectations of an ideal type of refugee worthy of humanitarian assistance and international protection (Crisp, 2009). Such an ideal refugee does not voice his concerns or political will, his experiences, or struggles, but rather denies his agency and past, and is a purely human victim of larger processes (Turner, 2015). The labeling and othering prevalent in the international context, particularly concerning displaced communities, within the scope of purported aid and assistance measures, ultimately leads to refugees being silenced. It also reinforces power structures and reduces displaced people to their statelessness, victimizes them, and

fails to fully recognize refugees as human beings with unique needs, concerns, agency, and agendas (Bradley, 2014; Nyers, 2006; Olivius, 2017).

2.2 Protracted Refugee Situation

The term protracted refugee situation has been defined by UNHCR as a situation whereby 25,000 or more refugees of the same nationality are in exile in the same country for five or more consecutive years (ExCom, 2004). In the past, scholars have referred to people affected by such situations as “forever refugees” and have argued that such situations are caused not only by political developments, including persecution or violence, in their country of origin, but also by host countries, which often lack durable solutions and adequate integration measures that could help address these situations (Dogon, 2021; Jamal, 2003).

In recent decades, the duration and frequency of protracted refugee situations have been increasing and by 2021, about sixteen million people lived in such situations, and the average duration of refugee situations has increased to around 20 years (UNHCR, 2021; Loescher et al., 2007). These developments are concerning as protracted refugee situations pose numerous challenges, first and foremost, for the displaced populations themselves, as protracted situations have severe effects for their future, the fulfillment of basic needs, such as shelter, food, water, healthcare and education, the provision of human rights and protection as well as their access to opportunities and participation (Purkey, 2013). Remaining in a protracted refugee situation often also means a lack of belonging to the host state’s community and the development of parallel societies, especially in cases where refugees remain in refugee camps or separate urban settlements and are not allowed to settle among the local population or participate in the social and political spheres (Bradley, 2014). This also leads to the breakdown of traditional social structures and poses challenges to social participation and engagement.

The fact that only a small proportion of the world’s refugees benefit from the resettlement to third countries, as well as the persistence of refugee situations and the prevalence of protracted refugee situations, is ultimately a neglect of UNHCR’s mandate to provide timely access to durable solutions (Loescher & Milner, 2012). This is partly due to the dominance of high-profile and highly politicized refugee situations or those requiring immediate emergency interventions, which diverts attention away from protracted situations in which refugees are stuck and few developments appear (Crisp, 2009). Protracted situations thereby become the new norm and are hence overlooked and accepted to a certain extent.

However, the continuation of protracted refugee situations leaves refugees reduced to bare life and as passive recipients of aid. They become trapped in long-term camps or settlements with few opportunities and little prospect for life, and often live in a social, political, legal, and economic limbo defined by a complicated and often sui generis system of governance consisting of international organizations, local authorities, community leaders and aid providers (Purkey, 2013). This limbo often leaves them with a lack of guaranteed rights, limitations on their movement and a lack of economic activities. In fact, only about 38 per cent of the global refugee population live in countries with unrestricted access to formal employment, including wage labor and self-employment (UNHCR, 2021). Protracted refugee situations, thus, often lead to inactivity, a sense of hopelessness and uncertainty, as well as to continued dependence on humanitarian assistance and a lack of self-reliance (Purkey, 2013). This state, which has been referred to by Crisp as “living like babies in UNHCR’s arms” (2009, p. 8), further deteriorates the feeling of dignity and self-determination and leaves displaced communities being warehoused in refugee camps (Agier, 2011; Schön et al., 2017).

Should displaced people decide to ignore the restrictions imposed on them and leave the camp despite prohibitions to become economically active, they ultimately may become more independent and regain some of their autonomy, but simultaneously enter a state of illegality and fear of being discovered, detained, or deported (Agier, 2011). Moreover, the lack of rights and legal pathways makes refugees in protracted situations extremely vulnerable to human rights violations and susceptible to negative survival practices, including diverse types of crime such as theft, as well as manipulation of aid programs and various forms of exploitation, including sexual exploitation (Crisp, 2009). Despite these negative consequences for the displaced people themselves, such restrictions are often used by host societies to prevent permanent settlement and integration of displaced populations in their communities, often out of concern for the local economy, infrastructure, security, social cohesion, and reduction of international support (Loescher et al. 2007; Schön et al., 2017). Keeping refugees in camps, and in “emergency situations” makes them highly visible to the international community and increases the host country’s stance for demanding aid and compensation for the burden of refugees, including their impact on natural resources such as land and water (Stevens, 2006; Turner, 2015). Additionally, the host countries can transfer their responsibility for managing refugee camps to international organizations, such as the UNHCR.

However, protracted situations also pose major challenges for the international community. These challenges include the provision of support, as well as international, regional, and local security and stability (IOM, 2020; Loescher et al. 2007). This is also the case insofar as protracted situations imply that more conflicts emerge or remain unresolved. To make matters worse, protracted refugee

situations predominantly occur in poor and unstable regions and often in already fragile states that border the country of origin of displaced populations and have relatively few resources (Loescher et al., 2007). Thus, the countries most affected by protracted refugee situations are only in this situation by geographical coincidence and due to the principle of non-refoulement, which requires states to provide at least temporary protection to refugees arriving within their borders (Hathaway and Neve, 1997; Loescher & Milner, 2012). Against this backdrop, it stands to reason that certain states and region, particularly in the Global South, are disproportionately affected by refugee situations. This is also underpinned by the finding that almost 90 per cent of displaced persons remain in countries neighboring their country of origin and, incidentally, around 60 per cent of the world's refugees are hosted by ten countries alone, including Turkey, Lebanon, Jordan, Iran, Pakistan, Uganda, Kenya, Ethiopia, Chad, and the Democratic Republic of Congo (Betts et al., 2017; Loescher & Milner, 2012). The Global North, however, has, since the 1990s already, and again so in recent years, shifted from a focus on asylum and hospitality, to containment due to concerns for security, social cohesion, the welfare system, and economic stability (Loescher & Milner, 2012). Countries have limited the numbers of asylum seekers through visa restrictions, detention, limitations on social welfare and the right to work, as well as restrictive interpretations of the 1951 Refugee Convention and in general, focused on deterring refugees from migrating to the Global North, and on containing and confining them in their region of origin (Crisp, 2009; Nyers, 2006).

2.3 Refugee Camps

As outlined above, refugee situations are often perceived and approached as short-term (humanitarian) emergencies or anomalies in the world order that need immediate solutions (Nyers, 2006; Oskay, 2016). Although not part of the UNHCR's official solutions to displacement, which only include repatriation, integration in the country of asylum and resettlement in a third country, refugee camps are often seen as a simple solution to sudden displacement situations, as they allow for spatial control of displaced persons, efficient care, and separation from the host society (Olivius, 2017).

As they are only intended for immediate emergencies, camps are established outside cities and other centers, and in a way, outside the normal order of things. Thus, they are created as extralegal spaces outside the national space, creating dual systems characterized by a distinct governance, and separate rights and laws, as well as a separate set of services, including health and education (Agier, 2011; Olivius, 2017). By creating such extraterritorial spaces outside the normal order, the people living there experience a double exclusion: they are not only excluded and forcibly displaced from their

places of origin, but also from the space of the local host community (Agier, 2011). In addition to exclusion, the creation of dual systems, in some cases, leads to tensions between those living within and those belonging to the host community, as it is believed that refugees receive better access to and better quality of services, care and education (Harrell-Bond, 1986; Loescher et al., 2007). Moreover, although due to their extraterritoriality refugee camps are officially subject to international law, humanitarian law, and other human rights and not national law, suspensions and restrictions of these, or the creation of exceptional rights and power structures, are not uncommon (Agier, 2011; Schön et al., 2017; Turner, 2015). This is partly due to the overlap of multiple jurisdictions applied by different stakeholders, who may interpret regulations differently (Riach & James, 2016). Second, however, it is also due to concerns about maintaining stability, security, and order, which according to those responsible justify restrictions on fundamental human rights, including freedom of movement and right to social participation (Agier, 2011; Olivius, 2017; Riach & James, 2016).

In this sense, refugee camps are also used as means of containment. On the one hand to protect the states of the Global North from destabilizing refugee movements by containing the refugees in the Global South, and on the other hand to protect the host states in the Global South from destabilizing influxes into their cities and the participation of refugees in their society (Pasha, 2020). Hence, refugees in refugee camps are “managed” as nameless, stateless victims, devoid of identity, and power in the form of confinement, separation and development measures is used to prevent the spread of disorder, instability, and underdevelopment (Agier, 2011). Correspondingly, refugee camps become means of exercising power, not only by the Global North on the Global South, but also through those in charge of and within the camp, and the prevalent power structures, including bureaucratic and administrative processes, health programs and the persistent separation of people, not only of the displaced from the locals, but also within the camp depending on nationality, and status (Malkki, 1996). Thus, while refugee camps serve an important protection function and as a measure to meet the immediate needs of refugees by facilitating aid delivery through spatial concentration of beneficiaries, they have also developed into ways of exercising power and control over those in need of protection, whereby their own agency is largely dismissed and meeting their rights for self-determination, participation and freedom becomes of secondary importance (Agier 2011, Purkey, 2013). In this regard, unequal power hierarchies persist between camp authorities and its inhabitants, whereby refugees become subordinated and dependent on provided camp services, and the decision making of the camp management and aid workers (Aburamadan et al., 2020; Olivius, 2017; Pasha, 2020, 2021a). The international community operating in and managing the camps possess, as Lisle and Johnson noted,

“all the agency to manage, act and ‘solve’, whereas those who are acted upon (...) are denied the capacity to act on their own behalf or in solidarity with one another (...) [and] any initiative or collective behaviour undertaken to escape these conditions is disallowed and results in rendering these supposedly abject bodies available for even more intervention and management”. (2019, p. 26)

Hence, refugees are exposed to the power of camp administration which remains largely unchecked and therefore, it becomes difficult to detect or prevent corruption, neglect, or abuse of power (Stevens, 2006).

In addition to these unequal power hierarchies, the idea of temporariness of refugee camps is problematic, as it tends to be inaccurate, and refugee camps oftentimes end up becoming long-term or even permanent settlements. Nevertheless, camps are seen as spaces of transition and impermanence, which justifies their governance as spaces of extraterritoriality, exception, and exclusion, with extra-legal conditions, which puts refugees in a state of suspended displacement and creates an indeterminate sense of temporariness (Agamben, 1998; Burlin, 2019; Turner, 2015). This permanent temporariness of refugeehood leaves refugees in a limbo in which they cannot settle where they are because they are only temporary guests, meant to continue their journey elsewhere or return to their home state, but which, at the same time, prevents them from moving on, as they cannot go back to their home, nor elsewhere, and ultimately remain confined within the camps' borders in a state of endless waiting, whereby their normal lives are put on hold (Turner, 2015). This state of temporariness further aggravates refugees' situation and combined with the exceptional perception of refugee camps as outside the normal order of things, limits refugees' lives to the bare minimum (Agamben, 1998). It leads to the suspension of basic human rights, including the freedom of movement, precludes access to employment and independence and leads to feelings of fear, insecurity, dependence, and uncertainty (Nyers, 2006; Olivius, 2017). Moreover, it closes down political spaces by preventing institutionalized political participation, as displaced communities can generally not partake in the political discourse back home nor in the host country (Olivius, 2017).

Despite the limitations imposed on refugees and their lives, the displaced communities living in camps often manage to transform this space. While intended to be temporary settlements of bare life, life continues in the camps, and the camps gradually transform into urbanized spaces of everyday life, social encounters as well as political and economic activity, that provide a sense of belonging to their inhabitants (Aburamadan et al., 2020; Dalal, 2015). Camps are transformed into more livable spaces that fulfill the needs and aspirations of their inhabitants, including through the establishment of places of worship, education, and healthcare (Dalal, 2015). Thereby camps become spaces of identification, relationships, and memory (Agier, 2011). Hence, refugee camps can be seen as semi-

permanent cities or even surrogate states with their own territory, citizens, public services and even ideology, whereby the humanitarian actors, and foremost UNHCR, fulfills the tasks of a government such as institutionalizing law and order, and provides services to its inhabitants (Crisp, 2009).

This emphasizes how camps can be transformed by their inhabitants, and how the perception of spaces is ultimately subjective, and different groups or individuals may perceive spaces differently, and attach different meanings, values, and uses of a place (Aburamadan et al., 2020). This, however, also means that the different meanings attached to a place lead to different outcomes and raise questions about the definition of place and who gets to define a place as what. It becomes a question of power, highlighting the complexity of refugee camps and leading to their transformation to political sites and struggles for influence (Olivius, 2017). While refugee camps are often described as sites of constraint and containment through which refugees become dehumanized and silenced, refugee camps simultaneously serve as sites of resistance, political action, and refugee agency and are hence simultaneously depoliticized and hyper-politicized places of opportunity that can both enable or disable political and social action and lead to the emergence of new political identities (Jacobsen, 2019; Küçükkeles, 2022; Olivius, 2017; Turner 2015).

Even though refugee camps are conceived as apolitical, strictly regulated sites of survival, there always remain some possibilities for influence and resistance. In the context of the refugee camp, and prolonged displacement, political engagement often emerges as a natural effect of the constraint and intensified life in the camp (Olivius, 2017). Thus, everyday actions and daily struggles may become political by challenging basic circumstances and re-framing common perceptions. This struggle for influence and power is not only evident in the encounters between humanitarians and inhabitants, whereby refugees may try to shape structures and arrangements, but also among the displaced communities themselves, which constitute societies of their own, and where diverse norms, languages, and social beliefs clash, and struggles to define new social hierarchies, roles, ways of living and shared norms emerge (Olivius, 2017). Hence, refugee camps enable the establishment of new individual identities benefiting in particular marginalized groups, while simultaneously allowing for the formation of new collective identities (Turner 2015). The specific context of refugee camps with the limited space and forced containment, enable easier communication and interaction among diverse groups of people, which facilitates political mobilization and activism and further strengthens cohesion among the refugee population in opposition to those who confine them and want to limit their lives to a bare minimum (Olivius, 2017). This challenges the traditional concept of refugee camps as spaces of bare life and exception in the Agamben sense (Küçükkeles, 2022). It emphasizes the agency and autonomy of refugees and their engagement in collective action to transform the camp

and develop new social structures and societal rules, thereby expressing their political will despite the restrictions imposed by the camp, the state, and the international community (Küçükkeles, 2022).

2.4 Agency & Empowerment

Agency can broadly be described as the ability of an individual or group to make their own decisions, develop strategies, take initiatives to achieve their goals and ultimately to control one's own life despite obstacles such as structural constraints or opposition of others (Omata, 2017; Lisle & Johnson, 2019). Agency can take both overt and covert forms, including rejection, assimilation, bypassing, and manipulation, and can also persist in small actions and constrained circumstances (Oskay, 2016; Lisle & Johnson, 2019). In this thesis, agency is used as a theoretical framework, and is therefore discussed in more detail in the corresponding chapter. However, a brief discussion on agency, and the importance thereof as well as of empowerment, in the context of refugee situations, follows.

As outlined above, refugees and their individual needs and concerns are oftentimes neglected, and their aspirations not considered in the design of policies and measures affecting their situations, but rather subordinated to the interests of the host state and wider international community (Purkey, 2013). Thus, the central figure of the refugee regime, the refugee, is often left out of the discourse and public debate. However, as Turton urges with his normalization theory, one should perceive

“forced migrants as ‘ordinary people’, or ‘purposive actors’, embedded in particular social, political and historical situations” (2003, p. 2)

and hence, despite their distinct situation, they should be granted the same right to participation and self-determination.

Failing to do so ignores the reality of the controversial policies in the refugee camps, makes refugees dependent on charity and compassion, and increases their vulnerability and the risk of exploitation (Bradley, 2014; Omata, 2017). On the other hand, by focusing on refugees as autonomous, conscious, and capable actors who creatively engage in social networks and shape their environment, one could overcome the portrayal of migrants as passive victims, and, more importantly, adapt more appropriate, refugee-oriented support and programming as well as strengthen self-reliance (Aburamadan et al., 2020; Bellamy et al., 2017; Oskay 2016). This is becoming an increasingly discussed topic in the international context, and it is widely agreed upon that programs and policies in regard to displacement can only be effective and credible if the international community critically reviews its approach, involves refugees in the decision-making, and incorporates their perspective and interests (Bellamy et al., 2017). Nevertheless, it is also important to note that incorporating

refugees' perspectives into international and national frameworks does not necessarily imply an adequate implementation of such frameworks on the ground that considers refugees' standpoints. Therefore, frameworks focusing on the involvement of displaced communities, and aiming to increase their participation, should be combined with concrete empowerment projects on the ground.

2.4.1 Empowerment

According to the United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs,

“empowerment is the process of enabling people to increase control over their lives, to gain control over the factors and decisions that shape their lives, to increase their resources and qualities and to build capacities to gain access, partners, networks, a voice, in order to gain control”. (UN Desa, n.d., p.5 - Introduction)

It can also be described as a process whereby individuals or groups in disadvantaged positions, such as marginalized groups and displaced communities, seek to improve their access to information and resources, as well as education and training, and increase their community participation in order to achieve greater ownership of their lives and influence over their own circumstances and environment as well as attain the ability to lead productive lives (UNHCR, 2001). Empowerment is thus a central means for sustainable development but can also be seen as a value to be achieved in and on itself (UN Desa, n.d.). Empowerment can occur in many different forms, but for the context of this thesis, the main focus is on political, legal, and economic empowerment.

Political empowerment helps to overcome prevailing views of refugees as a-political beings, which deny them the ability to participate in politics and portray them as irrational, ineligible and deprived victims (Omata, 2017). In these depictions, refugees are portrayed as having lost all rights through their flight and are therefore unable to participate effectively in political processes or decisions about their own lives and futures (Bradley, 2014; Nyers, 2006; Purkey, 2013). Political empowerment takes various forms and can include both overt and covert activities (Oskay, 2016). The more visible include for example, membership or participation in political associations and assemblies, while covert types may include everyday activities that are pursued with specific goals in mind, such as improving one's own circumstances or gaining authentic participation (Omata, 2017).

Legal empowerment, on the other hand, is a

“human rights-based approach (HRBA) that employs the law and legal processes to effect empowerment, ‘the ability or opportunity [of refugees] to claim and exercise their rights,’ and

thereby to gain the power to 'influence the behaviour of other agents and social arrangements'".
(Purkey, 2013, p. 266)

It stresses that solely focusing on economic or political empowerment is insufficient if more structural, legal constraints are disregarded, and emphasizes the normative force of law. As described by Purkey (2013), legal empowerment is a dual-purpose concept encompassing both a process and a goal. It is about enabling individuals, regardless of their roles or status, as well as equipping them with the essential tools to use the law effectively and advocate for their rights, thereby empowering their voices from the ground up and strengthening their control over their lives (Purkey, 2013). It is based on the idea that the marginalization of certain groups, including displaced populations, but also others, such as the poor, persists due to a lack of legal rights and the power to exercise those rights, and emphasizes the importance of the duality of a strong formal legal system and the legal empowerment of people (Johnstone, n.d.). A strong legal system provides individuals with their rights and legitimate, rather than only moral, claims thereof, and thus, more practical power vis-à-vis those in charge, while legal empowerment enables individuals to make use of the legal system and demand these claims (Johnstone, n.d.; Purkey, 2013).

Legal empowerment utilizes awareness raising projects, legal aid, and counseling, to provide individuals with the necessary information, skills, and tools to use the law to make claims and demand their rights (Johnstone, n.d.). Legal empowerment can therefore also contribute to the prevention of the misuse of power and the law by those in charge. Moreover, legal empowerment not only enhances access to justice and confidence in the system but is also strongly linked to other types of empowerment and forms their basis by providing legal claims for economic and political participation and the awareness thereof (Purkey, 2013). It provides individuals with information on the adequate conditions of economic opportunities and points to avenues they can take should these conditions not be fulfilled, thereby contributing to ending exploitation and workplace discrimination (Johnstone, n.d.). Overall, legal empowerment ensures the respect of human rights irrespective of the circumstances and provides legal remedies for asserting rights, entitlements, and status in situations where they are denied (Johnstone, n.d.; Purkey, 2013). In addition, legal empowerment exerts a broader influence by forging links with other empowerment strategies and by potentially fostering positive outcomes for achieving durable solutions (Purkey, 2013). This is achieved by providing skills and knowledge that can assist with resettlement or local integration, and by empowering refugees to actively engage in resettlement and transnational justice initiatives, as well as decision-making processes (Purkey, 2013).

Economic empowerment can be described as the process of equipping individuals or groups, with the capabilities and means to participate in, contribute to and benefit from economic activities and become financially independent (OECD, 2018). Economic empowerment aims to create sustainable economic developments by fostering active participation and self-sufficiency as well as reducing dependence on external assistance and poverty (Grossman & Post, 2019). It focuses on enhancing access to education and training, job opportunities and financial resources and breaking down barriers (Alnewashi, 2019; Jabbar & Zaza, 2015). Given the protracted nature of many refugee situations, economic participation is of immense importance. However, it is often disputed, as it plays a vital role in achieving self-reliance and ending dependence on foreign aid and local systems, while at the same time concerns about the impact on the local labor market and the often already scarce employment opportunities persist. Thus, refugees are often faced with barriers and restrictions in regard to finding decent, sustainable employment and establishing their own enterprises, as well as discouraged from becoming economically active (Grossman & Post, 2019; IRC, 2019; Schön et al., 2017).

Denying displaced populations economic participation, however, has various detrimental effects on their well-being, and not only leads to a loss of dignity, but also affects the social participation and local integration of refugees which further worsens refugees' health and psychological well-being (Mencutek & Nashwan, 2021; Schön et al., 2017). Moreover, it leads to a loss of skills, as well as to tensions within the community and family due to increasing financial worries and feelings of guilt, uselessness, and hopelessness for the future (Schön et al., 2017). Given the positive effects of economic empowerment, or rather the negative ones of the lack thereof, increasing the level of employment should be a priority in protracted refugee situations. This points out the importance of empowerment programs which lead to enhanced levels of choice and control over finances, as well as over one's own life, thereby not only decreasing financial constraints and threats of poverty, but also risks of exploitation (IRC, 2019; Jabbar & Zaza, 2015). Economic empowerment also has positive impacts on the access to education and provides important hard and soft skills (Jabbar & Zaza, 2015). By increasing opportunities, it also positively impacts affected people's confidence, self-worth, and personal well-being through a feeling of greater freedom, participation, and meaningful contribution as well as engagement in the community (Alnewashi, 2019; IRC, 2019). In addition, economic empowerment and participation of displaced communities can also positively affect the host and international community, as it decreases the need for funding, lowers the sense of frustration and tendency for upheaval, and avoids the waste of human resources and potential (Alnewashi, 2019).

2.5 Relevance of the Study

By providing an overview of previous research and locating the topic of this thesis in the field of peace and conflict research as well as migration and refugee studies, this chapter ensured a clear overview of the current state of research. Furthermore, it provided a detailed discussion and better understanding of the thesis' main concepts and intended to emphasize the importance of the topic.

As also argued in the critical humanitarian literature, refugee situations are often defined by institutional marginalization, whereby humanitarianism serves as a form of governance to manage refugees through categorization processes and interventions (Pasha, 2020). These encourage certain behaviors and attitudes and discourage others, thereby complicating refugees' own approaches and limiting their authenticity (Pasha, 2020). Although a process towards long-term solutions that not only meet the immediate needs of refugees but also promote their resilience and self-reliance has become more popular within the humanitarian sector, and official programs more often focus on refugee empowerment and increasingly see refugees as socio-economic actors, refugees still criticize that their voices and aspirations, including their freedom of movement and (political) participation, continue to be hampered by restrictions (Bellamy et al., 2017; Burlin, 2019; Purkey, 2013).

Therefore, this thesis focuses on the agency and empowerment of displaced communities and documents current practices and circumstances. It creates a holistic perspective that focuses on the legal, economic, and political situation, both on paper and in practice and analyzes the discrepancies between the intended and the actual outcomes. It not only considers international and national frameworks, but also looks at empowerment projects and initiatives, and analyzes the implementation of both in practice. Thereby, this thesis focuses on the rights of displaced people to live with dignity and agency, rather than merely surviving as voiceless beneficiaries warehoused on the margins of society without the possibility of participation and meaningful contribution and addresses an important gap in current research on displaced people and their agency.

3 Theoretical Framework

The following chapter discusses the theoretical approaches which are applied throughout this thesis. It firstly introduces a decolonial feminist and intersectional approach which is adapted as a general lens throughout this thesis and intends to challenge dominant narratives of the Global North as well as to point out and consider underlying systems and structures of oppression and power. The chapter continues by introducing an everyday approach which, while also being considered throughout the thesis, is particularly relevant when looking at the ways restrictions and obstacles are subverted by displaced populations to forward personal and political matters. It emphasizes the agency of displaced populations and allows for an analysis of the limits and chances within the everyday of displaced populations in camp settings. After introducing these general lenses, the concept of agency is discussed in more detail in the last section of the chapter. It provides a concrete conceptualization of agency which focuses on its interplay with structure and further mentions the concrete ways in which it is applied in the thesis. In this context the concept of empowerment and its relation to agency is introduced as well.

3.1 Decolonial Feminist and Intersectional Approach

In the international discourse, it is often assumed and to some extent expected that refugees willingly give up their political identity in exchange for basic necessities of life, such as shelter and security (Hägglund, 2019). Thus, refugees, especially those in camps, are seen as apolitical beings, separated from their past and reduced to bare life without any right to their own agency (Hägglund, 2019; Lisle & Johnson, 2019; Malkki 1996). However, as Lisle and Johnson pointed out,

“migrants are not just passive objects targeted by various forms of governance (e.g. public health, security): they are subjects with dignity and agency who care for themselves and each other in ways that exceed mere biological survival”. (2019, p. 34)

Therefore, the generalized understanding of refugees as voiceless, rule abiding and homogenous group is increasingly challenged, and the governance of displaced populations has been criticized as a modern version of imperialism (Hägglund, 2019).

This is not only due to the treatment of refugees themselves by the international community, but also closely related to the dominance of the Global North’s approaches and the power dynamics between the local and the international. Besides a general tendency to focus on migration from countries of the South to the North rather than South-South migration, there is a widespread prioritization of the Global North’s perspectives and concerns, which undermines the situation in the Global South

(Nasser-Eddin & Abu-Assab, 2020). Thus, while many countries of the Global South are seen as so-called transit countries, they often end up being refugees' permanent place of residence and should be treated as such, and necessary attention should be paid to the role they play in the migration governance. The same applies to the refugees themselves, who should not simply be seen as voiceless and agency-less numbers, but rather as people with individual histories, needs and voices (Nasser-Eddin & Abu-Assab, 2020). In considering international, as well as national, regulations and frameworks, a decolonial approach lends itself to highlighting the continuing impact of colonial structures rooted in a long tradition of domination and underlying systems of oppression and power. Moreover, a decolonial perspective considers the various political agendas at play and acknowledges the experiences and voices of those who have been and continue to be marginalized.

This also underscores the importance of an intersectional approach which takes into account the diversity of refugees and their experiences, including different values, nationalities, gender identities, social economic status as well as other specific personal characteristics and their intersection. In contrast, the international as well as various national regimes continue with the establishment of generalized categories, each with assumed characteristics and features. Thereby, ascribing the same vulnerabilities and needs to the people belonging to each of these categories, without any consideration of the individuals themselves or their experiences. This has led to a disjuncture between official categories and lived experiences and has constraining effects on the individual. Thus, it has been emphasized that while categories themselves might not be problematic and can in general, be useful, one cannot omit the values and assumptions attached to them and needs to consider their effects for the individual and the social hierarchies they create (Hägglund, 2019).

Intersectionality as an analytical tool, is therefore useful in the context of refugee studies. While the concept itself has no clear definition, it has commonly been understood as

“a way of understanding and analyzing the complexity in the world, in people, and in human experiences. The events and conditions of social and political life and the self can seldom be understood as shaped by one factor. They are generally shaped by many factors in diverse and mutually influencing ways. When it comes to social inequality, people's lives and organization of power in a given society are better understood as being shaped not by a single axis of social division, be it race or gender or class, but by many axes that work together and influence each other. Intersectionality as an analytical tool gives people better access to the complexity of the world and of themselves”. (Collins & Bilge, 2016, p. 11)

Hence, an intersectional perspective takes into account the various categories refugees may belong to and considers how these interact with one another and are affected by power as well as how they, in connection with various power structures, may lead to marginalization, victimization and oppression (Hägglund, 2019). This is particularly important, considering the various forms of displacement and violence refugees may have experienced, and the continuing effects these experiences have on their life and social interactions. An intersectional approach therefore helps to contextualize the various issues covered in this thesis by pointing to the intersection of categories, their fluctuating boundaries, and the interlocking structures of power (Nasser-Eddin & Abu-Assab, 2020).

Consonant with this is feminism, which when thought about as a lens to address the topic of this thesis, serves as an additional analytical tool to look at the various contextualizations of power and their way of marginalizing people in various ways, in relation to their social background and experiences (Hägglund, 2019; Nasser-Eddin & Abu-Assab, 2020). However, while oftentimes both intersectional as well as feminist literature focuses on women, the following research is not limited to this category, but rather takes into consideration, the experiences of various refugee identities. Thereby this thesis aims to provide a more holistic picture and to avoid falling into structures of marginalization and ignoring gendered experiences in conflict and displacement (Hägglund, 2019).

Overall, applying a combined decolonial intersectional feminist approach as a lens to the research of displaced communities and the effects of national and international frameworks on their agency aims at looking beyond set categories and individual identities by considering the underlying systems of oppression and powers and the way colonial structures remain present in contemporary migration governance and discourse.

3.2 Everyday (Peace) Approach

For the analysis of the limits and chances of displaced populations' agency in camp settings, and their own strategies to subvert dominant structures, an everyday approach is essential and is furthermore in line with the general critical research agenda of this thesis. Everyday (peace) theory questions the supremacy of states and formal institutions as the main categories of international political analysis and instead emphasizes the social and political significance of "little nothings" and ephemeral politics (Guillaume & Huysmans, 2019; Mac Ginty, 2014). Ephemeral politics hereby refers to transient, fleeting practices and expressions of resistance, contestation or negotiation that occur within the everyday and are often dismissed or considered irrelevant due to their temporary nature (Guillaume & Huysmans, 2019). Thus, everyday peace theory intends to draw attention to objects whose social and political power and significance are overlooked by traditional approaches to political science and

international relations, either because they are seen as meaningless in the context of world politics or because they are reproduced by or dependent on larger structures (Guillaume & Huysmans, 2019).

Rather than being a fixed concept however, an everyday approach serves as an analytical tool to explore social life and broadens dominant perceptions of what is seen as political or of political significance (Guillaume & Huysmans, 2019). In this context, Guillaume and Huysmans (2019) argue that by shifting the analysis from exceptional (international) politics to the ordinary, a plurality of temporalities emerges that leads to intersections between the everyday and the international, influencing what is considered significant and relevant and what is not. In this sense, time and especially history should not be seen as linear or as a series of exceptional moments, but rather as an interplay and continuity of fleeting, everyday moments, and practices (Guillaume & Huysmans, 2019). These fleeting, ephemeral moments and practices may constitute expressions of contestation and dissent and may transcend and persist in different temporalities (Guillaume & Huysmans, 2019). Through this intertemporal persistence, continuity, and their traces, such seemingly fleeting, everyday moments and actions become significant for politics and for questioning dominant power structures and norms (Guillaume & Huysmans, 2019).

An everyday approach, hence, challenges dominant narratives by placing an emphasis on the relevance of routinized practices used by individuals and collectives to shape their experiences and daily encounters, particularly in spheres dominated by limitations and various forms of structural violence (Mac Ginty, 2014). Thereby, an everyday approach seeks to make political life common and denotes the importance of context to define the meaning of practices, things and relations and decide whether or not something is political. As Guillaume and Huysmans (2019) pointed out, the everyday has a dual function: it highlights the abundance of life by bringing agents belonging to subaltern groups to the political sphere, and it accentuates the political significance of ephemeral practices, which might otherwise remain unnoticed due to their apparent insignificance or irrelevance. This is in line with Billig (1995) who argues that ostensibly banal and mundane ideas and practices can actually be significant and political.

An everyday perspective is well-suited for the topics discussed in this thesis. It counters the widespread belief that common people, including refugees, are mainly reactive and solely passively taking part in processes around them, and emphasizes the way these so-called ordinary people play a part in the social and political order (Guillaume & Huysmans, 2019; Mac Ginty, 2014). Thus, the political, the extra-ordinary and ordinary, takes place commonly through personal and everyday actions, which through their repetition, accumulation and traces influence the larger, international scale, while simultaneously being restricted and enabled by these institutionalized structures

(Guillaume & Huysmans, 2019). This means that what matters at the political level does not necessarily have to fit into the institutionalized conceptualization of politics, but rather be understood as constantly evolving and as present in the everyday worlds, encounters, and experiences of the common people (Guillaume & Huysmans, 2019; Lisle & Johnson, 2019). Thereby, the everyday should also be seen as an interplay of various understandings of “the political” and as intricately connected to power structures and debates on resilience as well as the marginalized individuals’ and communities’ ability to exercise agency (Mac Ginty, 2014).

Applying an everyday approach to the topic of the agency of displaced populations in protracted refugee situations, points out the numerous ways through which these populations gather to collaborate and agitate against their invisibility and abjection. It is furthermore a useful tool to analyze the implementation of formally designed frameworks on the ground and uncover possible dichotomies regarding the possibilities to exercise agency. Lastly, an everyday approach questions the fixity and homogeneity of established categories and aids to look beyond dominant narratives and perceptions of marginalized communities and to apply a more critical perspective (Mac Ginty, 2014).

3.3 Agency as Theoretical Framework

The assumption that vulnerability is associated with passivity, victimization and the loss of self-determination remains omnipresent in popular discourse and visible in the national and international management of spaces such as refugee camps. However, as Safouane et al. (2020) note, sound research on refugees’ migration trajectories shows that they remain active agents throughout their journey, irrespective of their circumstances and motives for migration. While this thesis does not intend to present a romanticized understanding of migrant agency, it does aim to further deconstruct the assumed incompatibility of agency and forced displacement, and show how refugees, while sometimes constrained in their choices, often subvert these obstacles and exercise agency in many ways. The following therefore provides a general understanding of agency, points out its purpose and briefly discusses some debates on the conceptualization of agency. It continues with the concrete conceptualization of agency applied in this thesis, discusses the distinctiveness of refugee agency, and talks about the specific types of agency analyzed throughout this thesis.

The term agency is somewhat elusive and vague, but can be broadly defined as the capacity of a person to act within a specific social context in relation to their own position and based on choices, needs and desires, thereby shaping the circumstances in which they live and exercising some measure of control over their own life, however limited (see e.g. Bakewell, 2010; Clark-Kazak, 2014; Emirbayer & Mische, 1998; Safouane et al., 2020). Agency should be understood as a process of

social engagement, which is both informed by the past, but also oriented toward the future and toward the present (Emirbayer & Mische, 1998). Furthermore, it has been argued that agency has certain qualifications that need to be considered. These include a certain level of consciousness, meaning that the agent needs to be aware of their action as well as the structural context in which it is exercised (Oskay, 2016). Moreover, agency is assumed to be purpose driven, thus the agent's actions are either led by a specific goal or by a subconscious set of intentions and lastly, agency requires a certain degree of choice, and hence the absence of force and option to act otherwise (Oskay, 2016).

In general, agency should therefore also be seen as unrelated to the degree of accomplishment of an action, and rather about the intentionality behind it. In addition, agency can be exercised both individually, as well as collectively and is something inherent, yet sometimes invisible, to all human beings, no matter their circumstances (Oskay, 2016). Even in situations of extreme coercion, agency is present and can serve as a tool to process experiences and cope with life, as well as reappropriate one's own subjectivity and reshape one's social context (Bakewell, 2010; Safouane et al., 2020). Accordingly, agency should also be seen as ensuring some degree of freedom and a way of expressing oneself, as well as a method to achieve recognition as individual self by others (Bakewell, 2010; Häkli & Kallio, 2014).

As already mentioned above, the concept of agency is a slippery term, which has led to some heated debates about the nature of agency and particularly its relation to structure (Bakewell, 2010; Kanal & Rottmann, 2021). Through these debates, three main strands of sociological and political accounts of agency have emerged (Oskay, 2016). The first one is intricately connected with liberal ideas and sees human beings as largely independent and autonomous and thus considers their circumstances as unaffected by structural constraints and as result of individual choices (Oskay, 2016). The second approach has been shaped by post-structuralist theorists such as Foucault and Laclau and sees the individual as constituted by social and discursive structures and precludes any sort of independent human action (Glynos & Howarth, 2008). The third strand is the most popular in recent works and could be seen as a combination of the two other approaches. It establishes a middle ground between the two by acknowledging the individual's capacity for agency while also emphasizing the influence of structures on the exercise of agency (Oskay, 2016).

This last strand has also been popular in feminist and postcolonial research, and researchers such as Spivak (1988) and Mahmood (2005) have criticized the earlier approaches as too binary and Eurocentric, based on a liberal conception of autonomous individual personhood (Kanal & Rottmann, 2021). The last strand, however, is seen as useful to better understand the interdependencies between subordinates' agency and their social and discursive context. Thus, agency is embedded in a social

context of political, economic, historical, and cultural factors, which defines the specific power dynamics and discursive field in place at any given time and thereby the possibilities for the exercise of agency of the individuals belonging to that specific social context (Safouane et al., 2020). Hence, agency is contextual and is performed within and in relation to specific power structures and normative frameworks which define what and who is seen as meaningful and part of the discourse (Safouane et al., 2020). In concrete terms, this means that the exercise of an individual's agency is enabled, but also constraint by larger structural conditions, such as labor markets, government policies and cultural factors, whether they are visible or only perceived subconsciously (Bakewell, 2010). Moreover, these various structural conditions may transcend the individual's presence in them, implying that the way an individual relates to their past, future and present and the prevailing conditions, may also affect their conception of agentic possibility at various places and times (Emirbayer & Mische, 1998). Accordingly, the possibilities for agency are not solely influenced by structures themselves, but also the individual's relation and perception of them and therefore, the same structural conditions may have varying effects on the people within them.

This points out the complex relation between agency and structure and the mutually constraining and enabling effects underlying structures may have on human agency. However, it also brings to attention the dual nature of structure as both the medium and the outcome of social practices, and hence the constitutive relation of structure and agency (Bakewell, 2010; Oskay, 2016). Structure not only shapes social practices, being expressions of agency, but is in turn reproduced and possibly transformed by them as they can change the social context by pushing the boundaries of the normative framework (Bakewell, 2010; Safouane, et al., 2020). This duality indicates that structures cannot exist independently, but rather only exist virtually as the potential to shape practice at time of action and in so far as individuals reconstruct them through their perception of the system and their social practices (Bakewell, 2010; Healey, 2006). As Bakewell (2010) put it, this understanding of the relation between agency and structure thereby always allows for social transformation through the various interactions of different social actors struggling and negotiating to further their interests. This indicates another important aspect which is the intrinsically social and relational nature of agency. Agency is always exercised towards something and should be seen as means through which different actors (dis)engage and enter into relationship with their surroundings, including other persons, but also places, meanings, and events, and thereby constitute their own social context (Emirbayer & Mische 1998).

Using agency as a theoretical framework for this thesis and the topic of refugee agency in protracted refugee situations and in light of institutional constraints and possibilities, it is sensible to

conceptualize agency in relation to structure. Building on the previous discussion and notions of agency, agency in this thesis is understood as an individual's (sub)conscious and purpose-driven decision to act in a certain manner, while taking into account their structural context, thereby exercising some degree of control over this context and expressing their ability to transform it (Bakewell, 2010; Oskay, 2016). This understanding emphasizes the reflexive relationship of structure and agency and the ways it impacts the social relations and practices of individuals. Structure helps to better understand the complex social reality of its actors and the various legal, political, economic, social, and geographic conditions which influence refugees' ability to exercise different forms of agency. This also relates to the other theoretical frameworks applied in this thesis, as it stresses the role of different underlying systems of power, including colonial structures and various forms of oppression, which remain present in contemporary policies and practice and become visible through the decolonial feminist and intersectional as well as everyday approach described above.

As already mentioned above, agency is, even if in limited ways, attributed to all human beings and as such, migrants should be seen as agents who, just like any other person, deploy various tactics and strategies to adapt to their specific circumstances and try to improve their situation through diverse means (Otto & Hoffmann, 2022; Safouane et al., 2020). Furthermore, by exercising agency, refugees reject the socially constructed refugee label which is commonly perceived to imply victimhood and hinders the articulation and expression of any form of agency and other facets of identity (Safouane et al., 2020). This happens in the context of various temporal dimensions, as just like other agents, refugees express agency in relation to their past, future and present, and throughout their migratory process, and thereby try to change their future based on their knowledge and understanding of their past and present despite various forms of victimization and physical as well as structural obstacles (Safouane et al., 2020). Thus, the distinctiveness of refugee agency, does not lie in the refugees themselves or the various kinds of articulation of their agency, but rather in their particular social, economic, political, and geographic context and hence the specific structures which influence, constrain, and oppress their lives and exercise of agency (Oskay, 2016; Safouane et al., 2020).

Moreover, the perception of agency applied throughout this thesis attempts to overcome the dominant yet limited approach to refugee agency which solely sees liberatory and emancipatory practices such as political mobilization and activism or resistance against oppression, and thus, various forms of disruption, as possible forms of refugee agency (Kanal & Rottmann, 2021; Safouane et al., 2020). There are far more forms of agency exercised by refugees, including various forms of decision-making throughout their migratory process, which generally aim at dissolving boundaries and regaining some sort of control and autonomy over their lives (Kanal & Rottmann, 2021; Otto &

Hoffmann, 2022). In addition, agency can also be expressed in daily life and even through acting as expected. As Kanal and Rottmann (2021) put it, refugees' capacity to endure, suffer and persist as well as their aim to rebuild their lives should be seen as forms of agency. Consequently, the dominant understanding of refugee agency should be broadened and understood in all its complexity, heterogeneity and inconsistency, and the various strategies and tactics of exercising agency, which are possible in the specific and oftentimes incapacitating environment of refugee camps, should be considered (Safouane et al., 2020).

Relevant for this context is the distinction between different modes of agency. Bandura (2008), for example, distinguishes three mundane types of agency: individual agency implies reaching one's goals through one's own influence and resources, proxy agency on the other hand refers to the use of more powerful others to accomplish one's aims, and collective agency implies achieving a common goal through joint resources and skills (Kanal & Rottmann, 2021). Oskay (2016) further categorizes different forms of agency in overt and covert, and outlines rejection and assimilation (overt), as well as manipulation and bypassing (covert) as the four predominant types of agency exercised by refugees. According to Oskay (2016), rejection can be seen through intentional, and hence conscious, acts of defiance or opposition such as refusal to cooperate or to comply with the structures in place. Agency in this context is seen as a sense of capacity to resist and reject for example through non-compliance, protests, demonstrations, or campaigns (Oskay, 2016). Assimilation as the second type of overt agency is seen as the conscious choice of refugees to overtly accept existing structures in order to understand the system and distill its advantages and disadvantages (Oskay, 2016). Thereby, refugees may benefit from adapting to the system and going through official structures to forward their objectives. Manipulation on the other hand, a covert form of agency, implies seemingly working within the system and following official structures, while actually undermining the original purpose and understanding of these structures for one's own advantage (Oskay, 2016). Lastly, bypassing means to circumvent or evade existing structures without the explicit intention to question them but may be seen as a way for refugees to evade the authorities and their power structures (Oskay, 2016).

These categories of refugee agency are important categorizations, which are applied later on in this thesis, when analyzing the ways refugees mobilize to affect their current situation, peacebuilding, and displacement resolution processes (research question 1) as well as when discussing the ways displaced populations manage to surpass restrictions and obstacles and to take an active role in shaping their current and future situation (research question 5).

Another concept, closely related to agency, which is relevant for analyzing how the law might strengthen refugees' effort to become active agents (research question 2), as well as for discussing

the role of UNHCR and how it supports refugee agency, their involvement and activism (research question 3), is the concept of empowerment. According to Perkins and Zimmerman (1995), empowerment is a construct which links individuals' strengths and competencies with their larger social and political environment and allows those lacking an equal share of valued resources to gain greater access to and control over those resources, allowing them to gain control over their lives and the life of their community. Thus, empowerment should be seen as both a process and an outcome, meaning that actions, policies, and structures may be empowering (process) while at the same time resulting in empowered individuals (outcome), enabled to exercise agency (Perkins & Zimmerman, 1995).

Considering empowerment as a process generally encompasses two broad paradigms, an advocacy, and an institutional approach. The advocacy approach sees refugees as powerful agents but over-emphasizes the impact of institutional constraints which constitute structural limitations (Meyer, 2006). The institutional approach on the other hand sees refugees as powerless and serves a political agenda which proposes bureaucratic solutions, such as policies, to empower refugees, thereby lacking a deeper understanding of underlying structural problems hindering the exercise of agency (Meyer, 2006). As both of these paradigms are insufficient, empowerment should be conceptualized in less binary terms, somewhere in between. Such an approach recognizes the impact of structural constraints as well as of institutional interventions on empowerment, acknowledging that refugees are part of a specific context which affects their ability to exercise agency (Meyer, 2006). At the same time, however, agency is perceived as ever-present even if only in a constrained manner as it is bound by structural constraints. Nevertheless, such constraints do not hinder the exercise of agency altogether but simply limit it and lead to what Giddens (1984) referred to as 'bounded agency' (Meyer, 2006).

In general, it is argued that agency is restricted and enabled through the distribution of resources. An unequal distribution leads to structures of domination and oppression, while the provision with resources may lead to new possibilities for the exercise of agency (Meyer, 2006). Resources in this context should not only be seen as material goods, but rather as entailing a wide array of tools. Empowerment, hence, should be seen as a process through which refugee populations gain access to these tools, and can consequently use them to advance their own objectives. While this portrays empowerment as a top-down process, it is important to note that it actually strives to empower and strengthen individuals and their voices from the ground up (Purkey, 2013).

Taking into account the outlined concept of empowerment and its connections to agency, this thesis, specifically in relation to research questions two and three, analyzes various forms of empowerment as a process, in particular legal, economic and political empowerment.

4 Research Design and Methodology

The purpose of this study is to gain insight into the agency of displaced populations in protracted refugee situations and to address the ways the international and national legal framework and their state of implementation, affect the ability of refugees to become active agents. More specifically, this thesis analyzes the opportunities available to and restrictions imposed on displaced populations to take initiative and actively participate in shaping their lives as well as affecting peacebuilding and displacement resolution processes. Thus, the study analyzes structural and contextual factors, in particular UNHCR and national regulations and their interrelationships, to provide insight into the constraints imposed on and possibilities available to displaced populations to become active agents.

To analyze this subject, I developed five main research questions (stated above) which are addressed during the various stages of my research. Given the complexity of this thesis' subject and the extent of the research questions, the thesis consists of a multi-layered methodology. Different data and methods for analysis were used throughout the study to gain the most thorough insights possible. The following chapter discusses the general methodology applied in this study, explain the data collection process, the methods used to analyze the data and the limitations the chosen methodology entails.

4.1 Research Motivation

To begin with, it is important to understand the underlying motives and incentives of this study. During my studies I became interested in the way vulnerable and marginalized populations, in particular migrant and refugee populations, remain their capacity for agency and find ways to determine their own life, journey and future despite their own marginalization and the restrictions and constraints imposed on them by external actors, such as national regimes, the international community and local populations. All these forces contribute to the opportunities for self-determination and the utterance of agency as well as their limitations. I became increasingly aware of this interplay between the individual's capacity and external structures and forces, and their influence on the exercise of agency. Moreover, I realized how complex the various influences on a person's agency, and in particular on a refugee's agency, might be. Thus, refugees are caught in a complex and intertwined legal and regulatory framework impacting their ability for the exercise of agency. This complex framework does not only consist of formal international and national laws and regulations, but also includes non-binding recommendations, as well as policies, guidelines, and local decisions which influence onsite practices and thereby determine the opportunities and constraints of refugees. However, despite the existence of binding laws, official regulations, and guidelines, this

does not mean that these are also consistently implemented. Consequently, the situation on the ground may significantly differ from that envisaged. While outlining this research and defining its concrete research questions, I developed a great interest in better understanding these complexities and wanted to draw attention to the problems associated with translating explicit and implicit intentions outlined in (inter)national frameworks into desired changes and conditions onsite, as well as to the subsequent challenges for the refugees themselves. These interests and intentions were among the decisive factors during my search for a suitable methodology and ultimately led to my decision to apply a mixture of different methodologies, in particular policy implementation research and policy process analysis.

4.2 A combined Methodology: Policy Implementation Research and Policy Process Analysis

Policy implementation research has its origin in the Social Sciences of the early 1970s and emerged as a method to define and analyze factors contributing to the (in)effectiveness of policies and ultimately explain the underlying reasons for policy failure or success (Mugambwa et al., 2018). Hence, policy implementation research analyzes the possible dichotomy between the intention of policy makers, such as governments, expressed and recorded in the form of policies, and the actual outcome or impact of these intentions, as observed in the situation on the ground and of the affected population, and looks at what causes these dichotomies (O'Toole, 2000). In this context, it has been emphasized that the (in)effectiveness of public policies not only depends on the policies' design itself but also on the local implementation context (Mugambwa et al., 2018).

Within policy implementation research, a distinction between two different variables exists, output and outcome. Output means the impact on the implementers themselves, hence the institutions and individuals concerned with the policy's implementation (Nilsen & Cairney, 2020). Outcome on the other hand, is the impact on the affected society itself, or the specific targets within a society such as a specific group of people or organizations (Nilsen & Cairney, 2020). While output can more or less be defined in the policy itself, the outcome can vary depending on the context of its implementation, including external factors, which may or may not be influenced by the implementers or the policy itself (Nilsen & Cairney, 2020).

As already outlined above, a variety of policy forms may be considered in the context of policy research. They could include formal legislation, executive orders, regulations as well as recommendations, guidelines, and other official acts (May, 2012). Regarding their implementation, numerous factors relating to their design may influence the achievement of the policies' intentions,

including clarity and consistency of goals, concreteness of implementation measures, resource allocation and responsibility sharing, amongst others (May, 2012). Thus, a major issue of policy success is that policies often only include vague intentions or goals which provide little guidance on concrete measures for implementation and achievement. Whilst allocating resources, concrete responsibilities and steps oftentimes remain unclear, and allow for great interpretation on part of the implementers, leading to diverse outcomes (May, 2012).

Moreover, policies, as emphasized before, can never be seen independently from their wider context, and during the implementation process, local circumstances and conditions must be taken into consideration to avoid unwanted outcomes. This becomes clear when taking policy process analysis into account, which emphasizes that it is impossible to consider one policy independent of its surrounding policy landscape as well as prior initiatives on the subject. Policy implementation must be seen as a continuous process that builds on previous policies and measures, and where attempts at implementation consistently create new situations and contexts that require constant re-assessment and adjustment of policies to ensure they are consistent with their intentions and adapted to the new context (Springate-Baginski & Soussan, 2022).

Overall, it can be said, that the success of a policy and the achievement of its intentions depends on the clear design of the policy and the interaction of the policy and its setting. Hereby, the policy design outlines specific boundaries around the choices of policy instruments and implementation measures (May, 2012). Whereas the setting influences the concrete choices made (according to what is possible in the specific context) and thereby ultimately influences the effectiveness of these instruments and measures. Therefore, while a certain policy, with the instruments and measures outlined in its design, may be successful in one context, this may not be the case in a different surrounding, and hence needs to be modified to suit the changed circumstances. Regarding these changed circumstances, one may take into account a variety of factors and their interplay influencing the context. This is particularly relevant when it comes to the implementation of international agreements and protocols. Policy making and implementation are complex and contested processes, in which the domestic context, including local policies and interests, as well as negotiations and competition between different stakeholders, influence a state's willingness for the implementation of as well as compliance with international, multilateral, and regional agreements (Mugambwa et al., 2018; Springate-Baginski & Soussan, 2022).

In addition, implementation and policy success are influenced by various structural factors, such as the role and responsibility division of formal and informal institutions. This not only applies in the local context with the question of intragovernmental responsibility division, and the division between

the government, non-governmental institutions, and other bodies. But also, in the international context with intergovernmental division and the division of responsibilities between the states and international institutions, organizations, and other actors. Thus, oftentimes, policies create conflicting and overlapping responsibilities and unclarity in regard to responsibility sharing and the authority for implementation (May, 2012). In addition, even if responsibilities are clear, another major factor influencing the success of a policy is the interpretation and understanding of the policy by those (agencies) responsible for implementation (Springate-Baginski & Soussan, 2022). This is particularly relevant, as those in charge are again, influenced by their specific surroundings and context which includes their personal circumstances and beliefs but also their colleagues and managers, as well as many other factors such as organizational and interorganizational relations, the interplay with others in charge and the particular hierarchical structures in place (Nilsen & Cairney, 2020).

To conclude this part of the chapter, it is important to keep in mind the numerous factors and actors involved in policy making and policy implementation, as well as their interplay. This complex set-up, which is defined by unpredictable and ever-changing circumstances, makes research on policy implementation more difficult and limits the generalizability of insights and conclusions to other cases. Moreover, it emphasizes the need for a comprehensive research methodology, data collection and thorough data analysis to ensure the reliability of results.

4.2.1 Theoretical Discussion

Within policy implementation research, three different approaches exist, the top-down approach, the bottom-up approach, and the Third Generation. In general, these three approaches put a different focus on the research and aim to fulfill different concerns (Sabatier, 1986). The following shortly introduces the three approaches and then continues by more extensively explaining the approach applied within the present study.

The first generation, the top-down approach, is concerned with examining a policy decision, usually from governmental officials, to analyze whether and to what extent the actions taken during the implementation process were consistent with those intended and whether or not the legally mandated objectives were achieved over time (Sabatier, 1986). This approach has commonly been criticized for being too focused on central decision-makers, ignoring other significant actors, their strategies, and the interplay between different actors, as well as for focusing too much on the administrative processes, thereby ignoring political aspects (Mugambwa et al., 2018; Sabatier, 1986).

The second generation, the bottom-up approach, focuses on the concrete impact of a policy on the affected society. It takes into account local implementation structures and the concrete strategies

applied by actors at the operational level and analyzes what effects a policy has on a specific society (Nilsen & Cairney, 2020; Sabatier, 1986). The bottom-up approach has often been criticized for its flexibility and the autonomy allocated to local agents, who are often non-elected and hence, do not fulfill democratic standards, and who have been accused of neglecting their clients' goals and instead pursuing their own (Mugambwa et al., 2018).

The third-generation approach aims to combine the first two generations by adopting the advantages of both. The third approach is also applied over a longer period of time using multiple measures and methods and drawing more comparisons between various units of analysis (Mugambwa et al., 2018; Sabatier, 1986). Generally, its objective is to gain a better analytical understanding of the processes of implementation, and it focuses on changes of resources and strategies external to the policy itself, the interplay between various actors and the changes of a policy over time (Mugambwa et al., 2018; Sabatier, 1986).

4.2.2 Application: The Six Steps of Analysis

As outlined above, the general object in policy implementation research is some form of policy. In the case of the present study, the objects of the analysis are various policies relating to the situation of refugees. On a more general basis, these include the 1948 Universal Declaration of Human Rights and its 1951 Protocol, the 1951 Refugee Convention and its 1967 Protocol as well as customary international law. On a more concrete basis, the objects of the study include the Agenda 2030, specifically Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) number four, eight and ten, UNHCR's Strategic Direction, the 2018 UNHCR Age, Gender and Diversity Policy, the Comprehensive Refugee Response Framework (CRRF), the Global Compact on Refugee (GCR), as well as the Regional Refugee Response Plan (RRP) and the Regional Refugee and Resilience Plan (3RP). These objects have been identified to be the most relevant in analyzing the topic of agency of refugees in Jordanian refugee camps. Given the time and space constraints of this study, these objects are not individually analyzed in detail, but are rather part of a general analysis of the situation in Za'atari refugee camp and the basis for an analysis of the state of implementation of an inclusive refugee policy landscape which provides refugees with possibilities for agency and self-determination.

Within policy process analysis, six basic stages have been proposed for the analysis (Springate-Baginski & Soussan, 2022). Although I used this basic six-stage methodology for my research, I did not strictly follow it, but rather adapted it to the specific context of my thesis. While I included all of the stages, this was not always done in a clear-cut manner. Hence, some of the steps have been

(partially) combined as they are closely intertwined; moreover, their order has been reversed at some points to achieve a more coherent and adapted presentation of my research.

1. Key policy milestones

The first step of the analysis is to clearly define key policy milestones, including policy history, legislation, and specific events (Springate-Baginski & Soussan, 2022). In the case of this study, this step was done through documentary review. Thus, the first step revolved around the analysis of general laws and frameworks which were reviewed for their content on the agency of refugees to compile general background information on the current state of art, establish a basis of the field and gain an understanding of the various policies which influence the agency of refugees (see sub-chapters “International Law” & “International Frameworks”). This review gave an insight into the developments within the field as well as issues and various processes relating to the topic of refugee agency. Furthermore, it outlined the various actors and diverse influences impacting the field.

2. Political and Governance Context

The second step of the analysis focuses on the wider political and governance context, including institutional settings as well as institutional, donor and external influences (Springate-Baginski & Soussan, 2022). In this study, this part included the analysis of various documents as well as research on the hierarchies and competencies in place to gain a deeper insight into the structures and actors involved, and particularly into the responsibilities of the different stakeholders, including the Jordanian government, local authorities, as well as camp authorities, the international community and UNHCR. This is included in the sub-chapter “Responsible Actors and their Interaction” which provides an overview of the different actors and their roles and interplay.

3. Key Policy Issues and their relation to an agency approach

Thirdly, key policy issues relating to agency were identified. Thus, the development of policies including aspects of agency over time were analyzed to identify the main holdbacks and challenges of the advancement of agency policies. This analysis step did not solely include an analysis of the formal policies but also an analysis of their implementation and impact on the ground through documentary review. The main concerns of this step of the analysis included finding answers to questions such as: Why is there a need for refugee agency? What is the current state of policy implementation and what achievements regarding refugee agency can be noted? What issues have been encountered in achieving refugee agency and in implementing policies and laws regarding refugee agency? Therefore, this step provided an overview of the state of art and the current situation

both in regard to policies as well as their realization. This stage of the policy process analysis was included at various parts of this thesis, including through the discussion of agency in the Literature Review, as well as in the chapters “The Legal and Administrative System” and “Framework Implementation in Jordan”.

4. Policy Development Process

The next and fourth step was to analyze the development of the policies over time in more concrete terms. It meant not solely looking at the policies themselves or solely at the actions on the ground, but rather combining these two aspects to develop a thorough understanding of the policy development process regarding agency. This included an analysis of the interactions and responses of the various stakeholders involved in the process of policy formulation and implementation (Springate-Baginski & Soussan, 2022). In concrete terms, the fourth step revolved around analyzing how international guidelines and policies were translated into local Jordanian policies and how they were implemented in a local context (see section “Compatibility of International and National Law”). This included not solely an examination of the legal framework of Jordan (“Jordan’s Legal System and Refugee Policy” & “Jordanian Frameworks”), but also of local initiatives and concrete measures attempting to increase the agency of refugees (see “Initiatives for Refugee Empowerment”). To successfully achieve this step, a profound understanding of the organizational structures in place, as well as of the various stakeholders and influences involved, was required. Moreover, it was helpful to develop an understanding of the incentives and motives guiding the different actors, thereby gaining insight into their aims and underlying rationales and hence, a better understanding of their strategies and measures.

5. Outputs, Outcomes, and Impacts for Agency

The fifth step of the analysis was concerned with the outputs, outcomes and impacts of policies and their implementation on the agency of refugees. In this regard, the fifth step comprised the examination of the success of the policies and compared the intended objectives with the actual impacts (Springate-Baginski & Soussan, 2022). This step is included in the chapter “Framework Implementation in Jordan” which covers the (possible) dichotomies between the officially envisioned situation, captured in laws, official statements, regulations etc., and the actual situation in Jordanian refugee camps. It includes an assessment of official guidelines as well as the actions and measures taken towards achieving the envisioned outputs, outcomes, and effects on the agency of refugees, including an examination of the implementation mechanisms in place, and reference to the indicators outlined in the policies themselves (Springate-Baginski & Soussan, 2022). To achieve a thorough

analysis of the outcomes of the policies, various execution guidelines and evaluation reports, including those of the UN, but also of the Jordanian government and (local & international) NGOs and others were consulted. In addition, secondary literature, including academic papers and books, was sought to gain a more profound insight, particularly into the situation on the ground, and to be able to draw accurate conclusions. This fifth step is very crucial for the analysis of the policy process and hence, of high importance for this thesis and for the analysis of the agency of refugees in Jordan as it analyzes the actual commitment of the stakeholders to implement the relevant policies and take the necessary steps to change the situation on the ground. This step also aids in identifying possible setbacks and challenges inherent to policy implementation, including issues such as resistance to policies, long timeframes and pace of implementation, interpretation of policies and guidelines, institutional transformation, funding commitment as well as changing governmental and institutional set-ups (Springate-Baginski & Soussan, 2022).

6. Longer Term View

The last step of the analysis is concerned with an outlook for the future and how the policy landscape might develop. It usually involves consideration of possible threats and opportunities for the development and implementation of policy in regard to the policy as well as the institutional landscape (Springate-Baginski & Soussan, 2022). In this thesis this step is included under "Political and Ethical Implications for the Governance of Refugees" and includes a brief assessment of current trends regarding the agency of refugees as well as a short outlook on the future.

This methodology fits well with the overall research design and the research questions of this thesis and allows for a thorough evaluation of policies and of their implementation. Through its thoroughness, the chosen methodology gives insights into the developments of the policy field regarding agency over time and points out previously encountered issues, which provides learning and can be addressed in the further development of the policy landscape. Such a thorough analysis is important, especially when it comes to sensible topics such as the agency of refugees, involving vulnerable groups, as oftentimes the focus is too much on the creation of policies and the actual realization is neglected. However, the sole existence of imaginative and radical policies on paper is meaningless if they are not translated and manifested in practice (Springate-Baginski & Soussan, 2022). Moreover, a thorough analysis such as that described above allows to point out grievances and dichotomies within these policies and raises awareness for the issues involved. Besides not achieving the objectives outlined in the policies, a lack of proper implementation is also a waste of resources such as time, money, and expertise (Mugambwa et al., 2018). Lastly, the analysis allows for a thorough examination for underlying reasons for the lack of implementation, as it not solely looks at

the institutional setup, but also the power structures, relationship between different actors and potential hindrances within the implementation process, which could be related to both, weak institutional capacities, or a lack of political will (Mugambwa et al., 2018).

The aim of this type of research is also to analyze the actual policy processes, including the translation of international policies into national and regional policies and regulations, and to gain a better understanding of the objectives and motives behind the policies. This helps to get a clearer picture of the commitment of the different stakeholders and their interaction, as well as of the extent they incorporate the agency and self-determination of refugees in their policies and practices. This provides a general insight into the role and importance of agency as well as its influence on policy makers (Springate-Baginski & Soussan, 2022). By including both an analysis of the policy process as well as the implementation process on the ground, this type of analysis also points to potentially harmful discrepancies between policymakers' expectations, the actual practices, and the impact of policies on refugees (Nilsen & Cairney, 2020). In the past, inadequate policy implementation was often due to a lack of consideration of local conditions and hence the discrepancy between the perception of the situation on the ground and the actual conditions that the implementers faced. These types of obstacles become clear, when carrying out policy process analysis, which can help to raise awareness of these impediments and overcome them in the future, for example by being more inclusive, sensitive to variation and adaptable to local circumstances (Mugamba et al., 2018).

4.3 Data Collection

The present study applied a mixed method and mainly qualitative approach. It used a desk study method as the principle means for collecting data on the agency of refugees and the relevant policies.

The study was developed using data from a range of primary and secondary sources as well as academic literature on the agency of refugees. Sources of data and information were diverse and included statistics, legal norms, public policies, and regulations. In addition, reports, and evaluations from international organizations on the ground and their representatives with first-hand experience and insight with both Syrian refugees and Jordanian decision-makers, as well as academic work by researchers dealing with migration in Jordan, were consulted.

Statistics were collected using institutional, international organizations', NGOs', and academic sources. These provided insights into the situation of refugees in the Za'atari refugee camp in Jordan, including information on the fulfilment of basic needs such as Nutrition, WASH, and health. Additionally, statistical data was used to gain insight into the livelihood of refugees in Za'atari camp,

including their economic situation, their access to education and their employment situation as well as prevailing working conditions.

Legal norms and public policies were reviewed to gain an overview of the legal framework and envisaged situation. This included a review of international covenants, conventions, treaties, and agreements, as well as domestic laws and national legislation in the context of international refugee and human rights law relevant to the agency of refugees. Moreover, regulations including official international and national frameworks, guidelines, laws, and agreements, regarding asylum, immigration, employment, and labor were reviewed to gain insight into (inter)national standards and agendas relevant to refugee self-determination and agency.

In addition, a review of secondary literature and documentation on the policies and practices regarding refugees' agency, including qualitative and quantitative data, was conducted. This comprised a review of a range of reports and publications from intergovernmental (IGOs), non-governmental (NGOs) and advocacy organizations, as well as documentation from international organizations such as the UNHCR, the International Organization for Migration (IOM) and the International Labor Organization (ILO). This sort of review yields data on the situation of vulnerable groups, in this case refugees, and includes evaluations of public administrations, situation diagnostics, studies on compliance with objectives and institutional evaluations. It provides information on the implementation and compliance with (inter)national frameworks and their specific objectives and gives insight into the degree of their realization and hence, the progress in the field of refugee agency.

Furthermore, the review of secondary literature comprised scholarly works such as books, book chapters, research journals, and policy papers. These included case studies, research on specific groups in specific contexts as well as more generic research on the agency of refugees. It provided an additional (ethnographic) account of the situation of refugees in Za'atari refugee camp, as well as more generally on the possibilities for refugees' self-determination and agency.

Overall, the wide range of data collected for this thesis provided better triangulation and reliability and allowed for more accurate conclusions and further interpretations.

4.4 Qualitative Thematic Data Analysis

For the data analysis, I applied a qualitative thematic analysis using themes and categories to obtain a better understanding of the apparent and underlying meanings of the collected data. These categories do not exist independently but are rather intricately connected and intertwined. However,

sorting and separating the data into these categories was useful to gain a clearer picture of the complex topic and to be able to analyze the data more accurately according to the research questions.

I started with a general familiarization of the collected data during which I identified common themes that re-occurred throughout the various datasets to provide a framework for the collected data. During this initial categorization, I solely identified broad and rather obvious categories comprising (1) the living situation of refugees in Za'atari camp, (2) general notes on empowerment and refugee agency, (3) the legal situation within Jordan as well as (4) the legal international situation. I continued by coding and sorting my collected data according to these common themes and further defining them by identifying more specific (sub-)categories within each of them.

For theme (1), the living situation in Za'atari camp, the sub-categories comprise: fulfilment of basic needs, economic situation, education, and work as well as concrete programs. These sub-categories are all factors influencing the living standard of refugees and hence provide a basis for the exercise of agency.

For theme (2), general notes on empowerment and refugee agency, the subcategories include: camps as sites of political action, the role of activism, political activism, and activism as a form of expression. These sub-categories are meant to provide a more generic picture of the importance as well as the possibilities for the exercise of agency within the context of refugee populations.

Theme (3), the legal situation within Jordan, was subdivided into: actors and responsibilities, overall situation, public services and employment, and refugee rights and status. Analyzing the data according to these categories allowed for a holistic picture of the legal framework as well as responsibilities within Jordan and a summary of the basic legal, demographic, and economic conditions of the country.

Lastly, for theme (4), the legal international situation, I applied the sub-categories: UN responsibilities, the UNHCR and Jordan, refugee agency and cooperation between different actors. These sub-categories not solely provided insight into the international legal framework, but also the responsibility sharing between different actors and concrete regulations regarding refugee agency.

The development process of these categories was not straight-forward from the beginning, but rather an iterative process adapted throughout my research. I continuously reflected on and analyzed the data throughout the gathering process and conducted progressively more concrete analyses. Thus, the process to define this final list of themes and sub-categories involved a mix of generating, reviewing and redefining themes, as well as concurrent and additional data collection. Finally, the analysis

continued with a more concrete review of the collected data for the different themes and sub-categories which comprised a thorough examination of the data and a comparison of the distinct categories to gain further insights and draw conclusions.

4.5 Considerations and Limitations

Given the topic of the thesis as well as the chosen methodology and the described process of data collection and analysis, it becomes apparent that the present thesis is limited in its own ways. As the thesis focuses on the specific case of the Za'atari refugee camp in Jordan, the results of the study can only be generalized to a certain extent and therefore cannot be considered universal. However, even though the results themselves should not be generalized, the general issue addressed in the thesis, the dichotomy between international and national frameworks and their implementation, and consequently the situation on the ground, is an issue that is not unique to Jordan but is widespread. Hence, despite the limitation of the research in terms of its scope and impact, the research nevertheless provides important findings and insights that can also be observed in other cases and can therefore be transferred and used as a comparison to some extent. In addition, the insights provided by this research raise awareness of broader issues that are often ignored despite being prevalent not only in Jordan but also the international sphere.

Another aspect contributing to the limitation of the research is its data. As described in the data collection section, the thesis relies on primary sources such as legal frameworks and laws, as well as on secondary data through official evaluations and reports, and academic work conducted by other researchers. Thus, I did not collect first-hand data on the ground in Jordan myself but rather collected textual data in the form of frameworks and reports. This poses limitations to the research as secondary data provides confined information on potential issues of the data collection and the biases of the original researchers. Thus, as I did not collect primary data in Jordan myself, I cannot be sure how the secondary data I relied on was collected and interpreted by other researchers.

Being well aware of the issues surrounding the use of secondary data such as academic works and evaluation reports, throughout the data collection and analysis process, I paid close attention not only to the content of the data but also the authors, their audience, the purpose of the studies and evaluations as well as the circumstances in which they were conducted. In this manner, I developed a profound understanding of the ways in which documents are authored, produced, published, and consumed, and thereby ensured an understanding of their social and textual context and meaning. This awareness also led me to collect reports from various sources as well as to rely on a broad range of previous research and a wide academic spectrum.

In light of the time and financial constraints of this research, the best option available seemed to be to draw on a wide range of secondary sources, to include primary sources in the form of official frameworks, and to ensure a process of triangulation by including not just one form of data but a wide range of work. Therefore, and despite the aforementioned limitations of the use of secondary data, my methodology and the broad range of data collected still allow me to operationalize my theoretical framework and answer my research questions thoroughly and to make statements about refugees' agency and its relationship to the everyday. Thus, I believe that the limitations of the present study are outweighed by the strengths and insights gained from the broad array of data which I would have not been able to collect on my own within the given timeframe and constraints such as access to the researched population and the various actors involved.

To conclude, given the scope of the research questions of this thesis and the objectives of the study, the above-described methodology established through a mix of policy implementation research and policy process analysis seems a suitable choice which allows for new insights into the topic of refugee agency and in particular, the dichotomies between intended outcomes and the actual situation on the ground. Drawing on a wide range of sources, including both primary and secondary sources, also enables the collection of a broad spectrum of data that offers a comprehensive insight into the current legal and actual situation as well as the possibility of an exhaustive analysis of the topic of refugee agency in Jordanian refugee camps. Furthermore, the vast array of data provides the basis for broader statements about the agency of refugees in general and its connection to the everyday in particular, including an analysis of how international legal frameworks and international organizations such as the UNHCR affect the agency of refugees.

5 The Legal and Administrative System

As has become apparent, a major obstacle to refugees' exercise of agency is the lack of a clear and supportive legal and administrative system. While international norms and regulations have been established and are constantly evolving and influencing government's decisions and responses regarding refugees, they are, oftentimes, interpreted in diverging ways by different actors and may lead to fundamentally different outcomes and practices on the ground (Betts et al., 2017). This also means that refugees cannot fully rely on international regulations to be in place and applied. However, reliable knowledge of their rights and the ability to trust them is necessary to ensure that refugees' rights are fulfilled and protected, and to provide refugees with socioeconomic opportunities (3RP, 2023). This, in turn, would enable them to become less dependent on international and humanitarian aid and develop hope and prospects for the future. Evidently, establishing a reliable legal framework would not only enable refugees to gain legal agency, but also economic agency and physical well-being by allowing them to actively participate and increase their self-reliance (3RP, 2023).

To provide a clearer understanding of the situation in Jordan, and specifically the Za'atari refugee camp, the following chapter discusses the responsibilities within the Jordanian context as well as the legal international and national frameworks and regulations in place. It starts with an overview of the role of the international community and the Jordanian government, as well as their interplay, including the Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) between the UNHCR and the government of Jordan. It continues by introducing the main regulations and frameworks which affect the possibilities for refugees' exercise of agency. This second section is divided into international and national regulations and starts with a brief general background to applicable international laws, including the 1948 Universal Declaration of Human Rights and its 1951 Protocol, the 1951 Refugee Convention and its 1967 Protocol as well as well as customary international law. Following this general overview, the chapter introduces more specific frameworks, including the Agenda 2030, UNHCR's Strategic Direction, the 2018 UNHCR Age, Gender and Diversity Policy, the Comprehensive Refugee Response Framework (CRRF), and the Global Compact on Refugees (GCR). This first part ends with an insight into specific international frameworks on the Syrian crisis such as the Regional Refugee Response Plan (RRP) and the Regional Refugee and Resilience Plan (3RP). The second part of the chapter covers the legal context of Jordan and gives an overview of Jordan's refugee policies regarding the sectors health, social protection, legal empowerment, economic empowerment and education, as well as political empowerment. The chapter ends with a brief summary of the Jordan Compact and the Jordan Response Plan for the Syria Crisis.

5.1 The Administrative System: Responsible Actors and their Interaction

Within the international community, a variety of laws and regulations are applicable to the case of Syrian refugees in Jordan, and a number of actors are involved in the process of ensuring they are enforced, and international standards are met. These actors involve various UN agencies, foremost the UNHCR, which cooperate with international and Jordanian actors, including ministries such as the Ministry of Planning and International Cooperation (MOPIC) and the Ministry of Interior (MOI), but also the office of the prime minister and the Hashemite Foundation. Moreover, various international and local NGOs as well as grassroots organizations and local initiatives fulfill a key role in this context, some by being official partners or assigned to specific projects, others by having launched their own (supplementary) programs and projects within the refugee camps. The civil society organization Arab Renaissance for Democracy and Development – Legal Aid Centre (ARRD-LA) for example, is UNHCR’s official legal aid partner and supports UNHCR and marginalized groups, in particular refugees and migrants, by providing psychosocial support, working on media and grassroots mobilization, as well as doing research and advocacy work to raise awareness for the challenges vulnerable groups encounter in Jordan (ARRD, n.d.). In addition, the Jordan INGO Forum, a network of fifty-eight international NGOs is implementing various projects in the humanitarian and development sectors regarding advocacy, information sharing and representation to support Syrian refugees as well as other vulnerable groups residing in Jordan, including other refugees as well as vulnerable local populations (ISWG, 2017).

5.1.1 UNHCR

As mentioned above, the UNHCR takes a lead role in these cooperations and in the UN-related work regarding refugees. The UNHCR, founded on 3 December 1949, through UN-General Assembly-Resolution 319, up to this day remains the only organization with a strict mandate for refugees and the refugee regime (Loescher & Milner, 2012). Regarding its operations, it is important to note that its work is funded through voluntary contributions and that it can only become active in a state once invited by official representatives of that state, thereby making its work and impact highly dependent on the willingness, and the priorities and interests, of affected countries and the funding through the member states who are allowed to specify how, where and on what basis, contributions may be used (Loescher & Milner, 2012). Being an intergovernmental organization established and funded by individual states, UNHCR has to constantly balance competing priorities of humanitarian assistance and political interests (Pasha, 2020). Moreover, one should keep in mind the complex, ever changing and developing context of UNHCR’s work, especially regarding its cooperation with various actors

within the international system through donor as well as refugee-hosting states and other UN agencies, but also with numerous international, national, and local NGOs and other actors (Loescher & Milner, 2012). However, it is also important to acknowledge that once the UNHCR has a mandate, it takes on an Important role in the care for refugees and their well-being, not only ensuring international norms are met and services for refugees are established, but also aiding the establishment of new social structures (Crisp, 2009; Loescher & Milner, 2012).

In general, UNHCR focuses on two principal tasks, ensuring the protection of refugees and finding durable solutions for refugee situations, meaning their re-integration within their country of origin or their integration in a host country (Loescher & Milner, 2012). Over the years, the nature and scope of UNHCR's work has changed considerably, and especially in the past 20 years, the focus on the second part of its mandate, durable solutions, has increased and more work is done in the context of protracted refugee situations and in regard to the circumstances of long-term displacement (Crisp, 2009; Loescher & Milner, 2012). In addition to these two main tasks, UNHCR is responsible for the broader global refugee regime and its compliance, which includes a set of norms, rules, principles, and decision-making procedures that specify the obligations of states towards refugees (Loescher & Milner, 2012). Thus, the UNHCR takes a leading role in supporting and monitoring states' compliance with their obligations and international standards. This is even more relevant as there is no universal definition of the term "protection" which encompasses any activity aimed at preventing or ending abuse or alleviating its effects as well as those aimed at ensuring full respect for an individual's or specific group's rights (Wali, 2020). Hence, states perceive the term "protection" and their responsibilities differently and consequently apply varying measures in response to their obligations for protection which may or may not fulfill international standards. In this regard, UNHCR's role is to assess state policies and intervene when they put refugees at risk (Loescher & Milner, 2012). Depending on the context and agreements with individual states, UNHCR might also be responsible for a wide range of tasks, such as the registration of refugees and their provision with personal documents, ensuring access to shelter, food, water, health care and education, administering and managing refugee camps as well as establishing justice mechanisms for refugees to ensure the rule of law (Crisp, 2009).

Given this wide array of responsibilities and entitlements, some have argued that the UNHCR shares certain features of a state and UNHCR has sometimes even been described as a surrogate state with its own territory (refugee camps), citizens (refugees), public services (education, health care, sanitation, etc.) and even ideology (community participation, gender equality etc.) (Crisp, 2009). However, one should keep in mind that this stands in stark contrast with the limitations imposed on

it and its work through the interests of the international community and its funding as well as the changing dynamics of migration (Loescher & Milner, 2012). States remain the dominant actors, and without their support (financially and in the sense of handing UNHCR the mandate to engage in a state in the first place), UNHCR has little political power (Loescher & Milner, 2012). This becomes problematic when states are less concerned with international norms and responsibilities and more by national interests and security, which has often been the case in the past, and which has led to more restrictive refugee and migrant policies (Loescher & Milner, 2012). Thus, UNHCR is constantly trying to ensure international solidarity, burden sharing and adherence to the basics of the international refugee regime as well as states' obligations towards refugees (Loescher & Milner, 2012). To this end, a variety of strategies have been employed, including moral leverage as well as material incentives, with the latter in particular proving to be a useful tactic to achieve the support and cooperation of states (Loescher & Milner, 2012). This is especially the case for countries who have not (yet) signed the 1951 Refugee Convention or its 1967 Protocol and are hence legally not bound by their obligations relating to the treatment and protection of refugees. This is also the case for Jordan, which is not a signatory to the convention or its protocol. Yet Jordan and UNHCR have signed a Memorandum of Understanding in 1998. The following briefly discusses Jordan, its political structures and the government's role in relation to refugees as well as the MoU.

5.1.2 National Jordanian Actors

Jordan itself and its official structures are defined by a strong government that takes on the role of a coordinator, rather than that of an implementer, in the context of refugee management within its borders (Bellamy et al., 2017). The main actors in this context are the MOPIC, which is responsible for international donor relations, the MOI responsible for national security, emergency response and other domestic security concerns as well as for the management of Syrian refugee camps and refugee registration, and the SRAD mainly responsible for the security within the camps (Betts et al., 2017; ILO, 2015a). Given the MOI's responsibilities, it also holds the right to reject applications for residence or revoke residence permits without the need to specify reasons as well as to make decisions regarding the deportation of refugees and the issuance of service cards which provide access to public services (Akram et al., 2015). In regard of Jordan's current refugee policies and stand within the international community, one should keep in mind Jordan's history and re-occurring refugee inflows, which have allowed the government to develop its strategy and has given it a clear idea of its needs, concerns, and requests to the international community (Bellamy et al., 2017).

5.1.2.1 *The Memorandum of Understanding*

As mentioned above, Jordan is not a signatory to the Refugee Convention of 1951 nor its Protocol of 1967. Therefore, an official Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) between the UNHCR and the Jordanian government, signed in 1998, defines basic standards in the context of refugee policies and regulates the extent and nature of their cooperation. Thus, the MoU states the rights of refugees, as well as the duties of the government of Jordan, international humanitarian agencies and the UNHCR and provides UNHCR with a mandate allowing it to engage in the Jordanian context and provide international protection to refugees. With the MoU, a dualist relationship between Jordan's internal order and normative international values was established which interact through the political, social, and legal system (Riach & James, 2016). The MoU closely relates to the 1951 Convention by stating that Jordan accepts to respect the principle of refoulement, the definition of "refugee" as stated in the 1951 Convention without the geographic and temporal limitations, and to treat asylum seekers and refugees according to the internationally accepted protection standards (Akram et al., 2015; Wali, 2020). Included in the MoU is moreover, that the UNHCR holds full responsibility for determining refugee status. This is however, tied to durable solutions, the agreement that refugees' stay within Jordan should be of temporary nature, and the commitment of UNHCR to actively aid refugees' voluntary repatriation or resettlement to a third country (Akram et al., 2015; De Bel-Air, 2016; Pasha 2021a; Tsourapas, 2022). Furthermore, in an amendment in 2014, Jordan and the UNHCR agreed to extend the decision time for refugee applications from thirty to ninety days and to prolong the validity of refugee identification cards from one month to one year (Wali, 2020).

In terms of refugee rights, the MoU grants religious rights and freedom, as well as access to courts and legal assistance. It also points out the importance of being able to provide for one's family's livelihood and therefore allows those who are legally residing in Jordan and have a recognized degree, to pursue certain professions in accordance with the laws and regulations (ILO, 2015a). Despite this statement, Jordan ultimately remains in control of the right to employment which according to the country's constitution of 1952, is exclusive to Jordanian citizens (Tsourapas, 2022). Nevertheless, the MoU provides the basis for UNHCR and the Jordanian government to work together to ensure that refugees' needs are met, and their rights upheld. As such, it forms the foundation for UNHCR's mandate and the basis for UNHCR to advocate for adequate health care and education, as well as to promote cash programs so that refugees can meet their own needs (Mindset, 2022).

5.1.3 Additional Actors

In addition to the national actors and the UNHCR, other actors, including UN agencies, NGOs as well as INGOs, are involved in the humanitarian response to the Syrian refugee crisis, and constantly negotiate with the Jordanian government over policy decisions and the provision of funding (ILO, 2015a). In this context, the Inter-Sector Working Group (ISWG), which was established in August 2013 to coordinate the sectors within the refugee response in Jordan, plays a key role. The ISWG consists of UN Agencies' sector coordinators, NGOs, and the INGO Forum representatives, is chaired by UNHCR's Inter-Sector coordinator and reports to the UNHCR representative. It conducts activities to achieve greater alignment of humanitarian assistance and development consistent with global commitments made under the Grand Bargain, the Global Compact on Refugees (GCR), and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

Moreover, through its work with the Ministry of Social Development, UN Women plays a significant role in supporting female refugees and Jordanian women through sustainable livelihood opportunities and targeted services (Prieto, 2018). Lastly, IOM is involved in the Syrian response in Jordan through its support in regard to resettlement, but also in the medical and emergency response sectors as well as through its efforts against human-trafficking (IHD, n.d.). Furthermore, IOM plays an important part in migration policy research, development, and consultation, and aims at providing expertise to states hosting migrants and refugees, and to develop and implement rights-based, coherent policies aligned with global norms, regional commitments, and national priorities (IOM, 2020).

Given refugee camps' geographic location in remote areas, sub-national and local structures and actors, such as regional, district and municipal authorities, take a key role in the implementation of broader policies and frameworks, influence refugee camps and shape the situation on the ground (Betts et al., 2017). In Za'atari refugee camp, for example, the restructuring into twelve districts also meant a restructuring of the administration and security structures. Za'atari's districts now each have government administrators, security personnel, representatives from UNHCR, other UN agencies, and NGOs as well as refugee representatives, including refugee neighborhood watch units, to maintain law and order and prevent social disorder on all levels (Pasha, 2021a).

Overall, it can be concluded that the Jordanian refugee management is defined by a delicate balance between national sovereignty and international interest, as well as the involvement of a wide range of actors whereby the UN structures link national and international actors with the Jordanian government (Hägglund, 2019).

5.2 The Legal System

Having discussed the main actors responsible in the Jordanian refugee management context and their interactions, the following part moves on to discuss the legal system which provides the context of the refugee regime. It starts by providing insights into international law and refugee-specific international frameworks and then discusses Jordan's legal system and refugee policy, as well as Jordan's specific refugee frameworks.

5.2.1 International Law

To begin, one should be reminded that most human rights apply to all individuals within a state, and hence, not only to citizens but also to refugees, who should be able to rely on them throughout their displacement (Purkey, 2013). These include the rights laid out in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights of 1948 which guarantees the respect for dignity, well-being, and basic freedoms to all peoples and nations, and all members of the human family (including refugees), but also those included in the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, and its Optional Protocol, as well as a number of additional international human rights treaties (Mayer, 2016; Wali, 20220).

Regarding the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, Article 1 stating that all human beings are born free and equal in dignity and rights, Article 2 (guaranteeing freedom from discrimination and that no distinction shall be made in regard to race, color, sex, language, religion, political or other opinion, national or social origin, property, birth or other status), Article 6 (stating that every individual, not just every citizen, has the right to recognition everywhere as a person before the law), Article 7 (providing the right to equality before and equal protection of the law), as well as Article 23 (guaranteeing the right to work in just and favorable conditions and equal pay for equal work), and Article 25 (the right to have what one needs so that oneself and one's family do not go hungry, homeless or fall ill), and lastly, Article 26 (stating the right to education), should receive particular attention in the context of this thesis. Moreover, it should be noted that refugees, like every individual, have legal, economic, and political rights, ensuring their active participation, through the pursuance of economic opportunities, and the freedom of expression, association, and assembly (Purkey, 2013).

In conflict and displacement contexts, though, refugees are often presumed to be rightless, due to their de facto lack of citizenship, and the fact that neither their home state nor their host state is willing to guarantee their civil rights. However, given the universality of human rights, states have the obligation to apply them to every single human being, no matter their status, whether a citizen or

refugee and refugees can fall back on them even when “losing” their civil rights. This is particularly relevant when a state, such as Jordan, is not a party to any of the refugee conventions, as these international human rights principles can, in such cases, serve as a useful tool for assessing a state’s conduct toward refugees and asylum seekers and can empower individuals as well as distinct groups, to actively address human rights abuses, advocate for their rights, and deter states from engaging in behaviors inconsistent with their obligations (Wali, 2020).

5.2.1.1 The 1951 Refugee Convention and its 1967 Protocol

In addition to these general human rights, which are nevertheless, as explained, highly relevant in the refugee context, the more specific frameworks, such as the 1951 Refugee Convention and its 1967 Protocol, should briefly be discussed here. Even though Jordan is not a signatory to either of them, many of the rights laid out therein, are included in the MoU. In addition, the convention provides insight to the general context and the understanding of refugee rights, which should not only be guaranteed by states, but also applied by other actors, in particular UN agencies. In this regard, it provides the international community, and in particular UNHCR with a normative framework for its work and the further development of the refugee regime (Loescher & Milner, 2012). A key element of the Refugee Convention and its Protocol is the definition of the term “refugee” in the first Article which defines a refugee as:

“any person who [...] owing to well-founded fear of being persecuted for reasons of race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social group, or political opinion, is outside the country of his nationality and is unable or, owing to such fear, is unwilling to avail himself of the protection of that country”. (UNHCR, 1951, p. 14)

This definition was, along with the commitment to non-refoulement outlined in Article 33, adopted by the MoU between the Jordanian government and the UNHCR. In general, the Refugee Convention, like the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, aims to guarantee the respect for basic human rights, including full political and economic rights in the country of asylum, and the humane treatment of vulnerable groups during their time of displacement (Crisp, 2009; Wali, 2020). Moreover, in Article 34, the Convention states certain positive and negative rights, as well as the potential for naturalization in the state of asylum (Oskay, 2016). However, it must also be noted that the Convention, while having high aspirations, is quite general and allows for varying interpretations and implementations which has led to a broad range of asylum and refugee-related practices across countries as well as to the creation of a multitude of additional (regional) frameworks and instruments (Oskay, 2016).

5.2.1.2 Customary International Law and additional Regulations

To add to this part on the broader international context of refugee management, it is worth briefly mentioning customary international law as it emphasizes the collective responsibility of all states to uphold not only the principle of non-refoulement, but also the principle of “burden-sharing” in terms of the costs associated with granting asylum and receiving refugees (Loescher & Milner, 2012). This is particularly relevant at times when many countries invoke national interests rather than international obligations and anti-refugee sentiments are on the rise, resulting in decreased support and willingness to receive refugees or meet their needs.

Finally, it is relevant to note that there are numerous additional international regulations, accords and frameworks which complement these major policies. In this regard, it is notable, that in general, many (international) organizations working in refugee contexts have, over the past years, adopted a more nuanced and transformed understanding of what being a refugee means and are now implementing empowerment approaches which focus on refugees as active agents rather than vulnerable victims, dependent on humanitarian aid (Msabah, 2019). In this context the term self-reliance, referring to

“the social and economic ability of an individual, a household or a community to meet essential needs (including protection, food, water, shelter, personal safety, health and education) in a sustainable manner and with dignity” (UNHCR, 2005, p. 1)

is increasingly used and has played an important part in the development of innovative programs and frameworks. Many of these affirm and reinforce refugees’ right for decent work, such as UNHCR’s Global Strategy for Livelihoods, and some provide concrete action plans to support refugees’ inclusion in the labor market (UNHCR, 2018d). Thus, programs aimed at achieving self-reliance

“develop and strengthen livelihoods of persons of concern, and reduce their vulnerability and long-term reliance on humanitarian and external assistance”. (UNHCR, 2005, p. 1)

This is also in line with various organizations’, including IOM’s, UNHCR’s, as well as the Norwegian Refugee Council’s, overall aim, and effort to promote a participatory approach, focused on inclusion, increased opportunities, the empowerment of all migrants and the utilization of their potential. Such approaches underscore the capacity of refugees to actively engage in society, challenge dominant narratives about refugees’ passivity, enhance the participation of marginalized groups in the political sphere and thereby resonate with the everyday approach outlined in the theoretical framework. These participatory approaches, furthermore, not only benefit the refugees themselves, but also their host

societies, as refugees could thereby contribute innovation, reliability, and technical expertise (IOM, 2020; UNHCR, 2022d).

5.2.2 International Frameworks

Following this introduction to the general international context, this next part gives insight into some more specific international frameworks.

5.2.2.1 The Agenda 2030

The Agenda 2030, adopted on 25 September 2015 by the UN General Assembly, defines 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) aimed at peace and prosperity, eradicating poverty in all its forms, improving health and education, reducing inequalities and vulnerabilities undermining the potential of all individuals, ending discrimination and exclusion, and promoting economic growth (3RP, 2023; Grossman & Post, 2019). While they are not explicitly designed for refugees, they implicitly include refugees with their underlying critical objective to “Leave No One Behind” and the stated specific focus on vulnerable groups (Denaro & Giuffr , 2022). With this objective in mind, the General Assembly developed a rights-based approach grounded in empowerment, inclusion, equity, participation, and human development, and committed itself to reaching the most vulnerable populations and to addressing the intersecting inequalities which prevent communities from accessing equal resources, services, and opportunities, and from realizing their full potential (3RP, 2023).

Within the SDGs, and in the context of refugee agency, three of the SDGs should be highlighted: SDG 4 - Quality Education, focused on achieving inclusive and equitable education for all, SDG 8, promoting sustained, inclusive and sustainable growth, full and productive employment and decent work for all, and SDG 10 – Reduced Inequalities, aiming to achieve social, economic, and political inclusion of all, irrespective of age, sex, disability, race, ethnicity, origin, religion or economic or other status, to ensure equal opportunities and end discrimination as well as to adopt fiscal, wage and social protection policies beneficial to greater equality. SDG 10 is additionally the only SDG which explicitly refers to migration processes as Target 7 aims for responsible and well-managed migration policies to facilitate orderly, safe, regular, and responsible migration and mobility of people.

Despite their aims and urgency, progress towards achieving the SDGs is slow and more initiative on the part of the member states would be needed to achieve their objectives. Moreover, while the Agenda 2030 is included here due to their general applicability and relevance for all people, critics have often pointed out, that, while the goals are devoted to “Leave No One Behind”, they do exactly that, by largely excluding forcibly displaced people from the goals, targets and indicators defined in the Agenda 2030 (Grossman & Post, 2019). This issue has been described as the “refugee gap”, a

concept that refers to the dearth of specific information and disaggregated data on refugees, their well-being and their progress towards achieving the SDGs, the exclusion of refugees from SDG monitoring frameworks and national reporting, the failure to include refugees in national medium- and long-term development planning as well as the fact that the member states altogether did not address the unique situation of refugees in the agenda at any point, but instead merely referred to “well-managed migration policies” (Denaro & Giuffré, 2022; Grossman & Post, 2019). Thus, refugees are oftentimes excluded from concrete action plans and data collection processes on the progress of the SDGs, and simply left out and neglected (Denaro & Giuffré, 2022).

One could say that the refugee gap exists because of the selectionism used by member states to determine what should and should not be counted, which issues should be made visible or remain obscured, thereby determining the direction of social and political attention, advocacy, and concern (Denaro & Giuffré, 2022). This refugee gap is highly problematic as refugees constitute one of the most marginalized groups and the SDGs cannot truly be achieved when data on a large population like this is omitted, its members left behind and excluded from the progress (Grossman & Post, 2019). Moreover, while goal 10 Target 7 focuses on “well-managed migration policies” which might provide an overview of the political and legal mechanisms of the member states, such a descriptive overview does not provide any insight into the impact these policies might have on the affected population itself, their rights, and the degree of achievement of these policies (Denaro & Giuffré, 2022). The refugee gap thereby illustrates the persistence of exclusionary colonial structures of oppression and power in contemporary international policy, which continue to subalternize certain groups.

The refugee gap and the issues connected to it was also acknowledged in the Global Sustainable Development Report of 2019 (Grossman & Post, 2019). While the report itself did not include concrete actions to address the refugee gap, in 2020, UNHCR, in collaboration with the Joint Internal Displacement Profiling Service (JIPS) and Statistics for Sustainable Development (Stats4SD), explored potential approaches to closing the gap, and as a first step, defined 12 SDG priority indicators in three key policy areas recommended to be disaggregated by forced displacement. These areas include “basic needs and living conditions”, “livelihood and economic self-reliance” and “civil, political and legal rights” (Denaro & Giuffré, 2022).

It should also be pointed out that the Agenda 2030 with its SDGs, and in particular the indicators to measure their progress, do not align with the indicators to measure the progress of other refugee responses, in particular the Global Refugee Compact which in fact, barely aligns with the SDGs (Grossman & Post, 2019). The overarching issue which seems to remain in this context is the lack of coordination between different agencies and sectors and the fact that refugee responses continue to

be addressed with short-term approaches separate from larger development plans, such as the SDGs (Grossman & Post, 2019).

In light of these shortcomings and lack of inclusion of refugees, three areas have been recommended, where immediate action would be needed to ameliorate the situation of refugees and the fulfillment of the SDGs. First, member states should start collecting and publishing disaggregated data on refugee populations in order to draw comparisons between displaced communities and host populations (Grossman & Post, 2019). This would further help to draw attention to displaced populations and ensure that their needs and concerns are met in equal terms as those of the host community, and that no one is left behind (Denaro & Giuffr , 2022). Second, the international community and member states should adapt their national development and implementation plans to include refugees and ensure that the SDGs are not solely focused on host communities, but also inclusive to refugee populations (Grossman & Post, 2019). This not solely means more attention to refugees in the planning but also in the implementation and monitoring process, so that the goal of leaving no one behind can be achieved in full terms. Third, progress for refugees, in regard to their well-being, should be accelerated. This should not only include the removal of barriers but also the reform of policies in order for refugees to participate in host communities more fully, including through access to local services and the local labor market. Thereby refugees would be able to become self-reliant and have access to the same rights and protection as the local population, including freedom of movement, education, and work (Grossman & Post, 2019). Overall, through these changes, an improvement of the socio-economic well-being of both displaced populations and host societies could be achieved, as refugees would be able to participate and contribute to society with their skills and expertise.

5.2.2.2 UNHCR's Strategic Directions

To continue the overview of international frameworks relevant in the refugee context, the next part focuses on the Strategic Directions of UNHCR, in particular the Strategic Directions 2017-2021 and 2022-2026. UNHCR's Strategic Directions are not prescriptive, but rather constitute UNHCR's vision and determine the general approach and focus of UNHCR's work. Thus, in 2017, UNHCR reaffirmed its commitment to put the people of its concern, including refugees, internally displaced and stateless people, as well as their rights, needs, dignity, and perspectives first and support states in fulfilling the needs of these people, provide protection, achieve concrete improvements for their lives and find durable solutions (UNHCR, 2017).

In concrete terms, UNHCR developed five core directions to focus on during its work: Protect, Respond, Include, Empower, and Solve, which, in combination with its overall goal of putting people

first, also suggests the inclusion of the voices, perspectives, and priorities of UNHCR's people of concern in each of these sectors. This is in line with the aforementioned everyday approach, which emphasizes the importance of bringing marginalized voices to the fore and recognizing their contribution to the social and political sphere. Regarding the first direction, focused on protection, the main aim is to ensure the rights, needs and an appropriate standard of treatment of forcibly displaced and stateless people (UNHR, 2017). This is closely related to the second direction (Respond) which focuses on support for the rights and dignity of UNHCR's people of concern, to build an environment of confidence and tolerance, and to uphold a protection and solution-oriented approach which allows for cooperation with local communities and maximizes the inclusion and self-reliance of forcibly displaced and stateless people (UNHCR, 2017). The third (Include) and fourth (Empower) directions, aligned with an everyday approach, both emphasize UNHCR's aim to overcome the widespread perception of refugees as voiceless victims relying on humanitarian aid, thereby drawing attention to these overlooked political subjects. In order to overcome the dependence on humanitarian assistance, the two directions focus on better inclusion into local systems and communities, the empowerment of displaced and stateless people, and better provision of information, with the aim to allow refugees to actively participate in and contribute to their host communities. Thus, UNHCR aims to enable refugees to secure their own future and access employment, and thereby to improve their self-reliance and support durable solutions (UNHCR, 2017). Moreover, the two directions state UNHCR's aim to build on refugees' resilience, knowledge, and skills and to recognize their agency and potential by involving them in, and considering their needs and concerns during, the design, implementation, and evaluation of operations (UNHCR, 2017). The last direction, Solve, also focuses on a better provision and distribution of information for stateless and displaced people to be able to take better-informed decisions about their lives and futures, as well as on closer cooperation with other actors to address the causes and consequences of displacement and find durable solutions (UNHCR, 2017). By including a broad variety of actors, UNHCR, in line with the everyday approach, further questions the supremacy of states and formal institutions in the political sphere, and points to the significance of other agents and their experiences.

Given the extensiveness and importance of these strategic directions, and the continued displacement and related issues around the globe, UNHCR renewed its Strategic Directions for a further five years for the period 2022-2026 and reaffirmed its commitment to them. UNHCR emphasized that these directions are not solely a statement of intent but rather meant to define its strategies and efforts on the ground (UNHCR, 2022c). In addition to re-adapting its 2017 Strategic Directions, UNHCR also identified eight areas for additional, accelerated, and targeted action, including the goal of

strengthening accountability to the people it serves, and further commitment to intensifying its efforts to increase economic opportunities for displaced people, reinforce national and local systems and services, and enhance the resilience and self-reliance of those displaced (UNHCR, 2022c).

5.2.2.3 UNHCR's 2018 Age, Gender, and Diversity Policy

In addition to its Strategic Directions, UNHCR's Policy on Age, Gender, and Diversity, which it adopted in 2018, is of relevance when looking at the international context relating to the agency of refugees. Thus, the policy aims to ensure that people, including women, men, girls, and boys of diverse backgrounds, are at the center of UNHCR's work and that those covered by UNHCR's mandate can benefit from their rights and engage effectively in the decisions that affect their lives, families, and communities (UNHCR, 2018b). In order to accurately respond to their needs, UNHCR's Policy on Age, Gender, and Diversity aims to involve the people of its concern, their different experiences, capacities, and aspirations, in its protection, assistance and solution programs (UNHCR, 2018b, 2020). This is not only of significant importance in the context of immediate and short-term humanitarian responses, but also in protracted refugee situations, where the need for active participation is even more important to provide a perspective to displaced populations and ensure that they can exercise their agency and are not reduced to speechless emissaries. This importance is emphasized in UNHCR's policy which acknowledges the need for continuous and meaningful engagement with its persons of concern, and a better understanding of their needs and protection risks (UNHCR, 2018b). The policy aims to build on refugees' capacities and take their diverse perspectives and priorities into account through a range of participation models, accessible information systems adapted to specific target groups, as well as feedback and response systems for comments, suggestions, and confidential complaints through different channels (UNHCR, 2018b). Thereby the policy takes into account refugees' everyday experiences and to some extent acknowledges their agency. This will not only make the programs and strategies of UNHCR more effective but is also aimed at restoring the dignity of refugees and a degree of self-determination. Moreover, the policy and its measures increase community ownership and hence, affected communities' acceptance, and ensure the proper adaptation to the specific context and its particularities.

5.2.2.4 The New York Declaration: The CRRF and the GCR

Before moving on to the specific context of the Syrian crisis and the policies explicitly adopted for this situation, the next section discusses the New York Declaration and two of the Frameworks that were initiated by it, the Comprehensive Refugee Response Framework (CRRF) and the Global Compact on Refugees (GCR).

The New York Declaration (A/RES/71/1) was the outcome of the Summit for Refugees and Migrants held on 16 September 2016, at the UN Headquarters in New York. The summit was a high-level meeting of the UN General Assembly with the intention of addressing large movements of refugees and migrants by issuing a comprehensive report of recommendations and possible ways forward. The New York Declaration provides the baseline for further action to ameliorate the situation of refugees and migrants and is often described as a milestone for global solidarity and refugee protection, amongst others as it was anonymously adopted by all 193 UN Member States and hence, proves a broad commitment by the international community (UNHCR, 2018e). In addition to highlighting the continued importance of the international refugee protection system and reaffirming the commitment of Member States to fully respect the rights of refugee and migrants, the Declaration includes an agreement to provide more reliable and durable support to refugees and host communities, and to enhance opportunities for durable solutions for refugees (UNHCR, 2018e). Namely, the Declaration includes a Comprehensive Refugee Response Framework (CRRF) to guide future international action on refugees, as well as the preparation of two “Global Compacts”, one on refugees (Global Compact on Refugees – GCR) and one on Migration (Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration – GCM) the first two of which are relevant in the context of this thesis and are discussed in more detail below (UNHCR, 2018d),

The Comprehensive Refugee Response Framework generally does not create new management mechanisms or processes to respond to the ongoing displacement of people, but builds on existing ones, such as Humanitarian Response Plans, Refugee Response Plans, the Refugee Coordination Model, and development processes followed by the UN, Member States, regional organizations, and international financial institutions (UNHCR, 2018a). Its general idea is to provide a more comprehensive, systematic, and sustainable response to refugee situations which will not only benefit the refugees themselves, but also the host communities (UNHCR, 2018e). In this regard, the importance of the inclusion of refugees in the processes affecting their situation and lives was highlighted as their involvement would not only ensure a more adequate response suitable to the specific situations of refugees but would also allow refugees to exercise agency and to regain dignity and some level of autonomy in their everyday lives (UNHCR, 2018d). Thus, the CRRF aims at facilitating a better inclusion of refugees in their host communities through a rapid and well-supported reception and admission, and support for an immediate integration into the educational system and labor market (UNHCR, n.d.a, 2018e). This would help refugees to gain new or develop already existing skills and thereby enhance self-reliance and allow refugees to contribute to the local economy and the development of their host community (UNHCR, n.d.a).

Moreover, the CRRF calls upon Member States to immediately and continuously meet refugees' needs, including health and protection, through their integration into national systems such as social services and national development plans, to ensure their well-being and fulfill the essential aim of the Agenda 2030 to leave no one behind (UNHCR, n.d.a). In line with this, it was also emphasized that refugee camps should be the exception and should solely be temporary measures in cases of emergency when no other solutions are available, as they cannot meet the need for integration and can neither be seen as sustainable and long-term solutions (UNHCR, n.d.a). In order to achieve the above, Member States agreed to assist those most affected by displacement, including host communities but also national and local institutions responsible for the administrative side of reception and ongoing care of refugees (UNHCR, 2018e). All of the CRRF's goals can be combined in the four general objectives outlined in the New York Declaration: First, to ease pressure on countries hosting large numbers of refugees by supporting them in all possible ways. Second, to enhance refugee self-reliance as already outlined above. Third, to expand third-country solutions and fourth, to support conditions in countries of origin for a return in safety and dignity, both of which build on the overall goal to expand durable solutions and enhance the principle of burden-sharing (UNHCR, 2018e).

As noted above, in addition to the CRRF, the New York Declaration outlined the development of the Global Compact on Refugees (GCR), which was endorsed by the UN General Assembly on 17 December 2018, after two years of extensive consultations by UNHCR Member States, international organizations, refugees, civil society, the private sector and experts. It stipulates policy and practical actions by Member States and other relevant actors to strengthen the international response to displacement (UNHCR, n.d.b, 2018e). In the context of this thesis, it should be noted that Jordan did not ratify the GCR as it did not redefine the main principles of the 1951 Convention on Refugees, including the status of refugees and the principle of non-refoulement (IHD, n.d.). The GCR can be described as a non-binding agreement of international solidarity and cooperation with the purpose of protecting refugees and supporting the development of host communities. It is in other words a two-pronged pact that aims to strengthen refugee self-reliance on the one hand and promote inclusive growth for host communities on the other, both of which are to be achieved through the creation of economic opportunities, decent work, and employment, as well as entrepreneurship programs (IRC, 2019). Thereby, it builds on the New York Declaration as well as on the CRRF which both emphasize the self-reliance of refugees as well as their positive contribution to host communities when integrated into the local system and labor market (UNHCR, n.d.a). It should be noted, however, that the GCR, like the CRRF, does not envision new legal norms or a fundamental redesign of the refugee protection

system, but is rather intended as a framework to support the comprehensive and predictable application of international norms to large-scale and protracted refugee movements and situations. This is to be achieved through improved international cooperation and greater reliance on the principle of international burden- and responsibility sharing to support the countries and communities most affected by international refugee flows (UNHCR, 2018e). Therefore, the GCR sets out concrete actions and steps to be taken by governments and other stakeholders, such as UN agencies, NGOs, and civil society actors. In this manner, the GCR adopts an everyday approach that recognizes the importance of actors beyond nation states and formal institutions and draws attention to the impact that local actors can have in the management and accommodation of refugees. The concrete actions outlined in the GCR are further aimed at ensuring that host communities obtain timely support, that refugees are better integrated into host communities, as well as into local systems such as health, education, and employment so that they can rebuild their lives and livelihood, and that durable and sustainable solutions are pursued from the outset (UNHCR, 2018e). In this way, the GCR, like the CRRF, follows the four key objectives of the New York Declaration to reduce pressures on host countries (1), strengthen refugee self-reliance (2), expand access to third country solutions (3), and support conditions in countries of origin for return in safety and dignity (4) (UNHCR, 2018e).

Regarding the four objectives of the CRRF and GCR, also outlined in the New York Declaration, the UNHCR defined a dedicated indicator framework in July 2019, to facilitate the measurement of their progress and achievement (Denaro & Giuffr , 2022). Objective two of the GCR and CRRF, to enhance refugee self-reliance, which notes that

“To foster inclusive economic growth for host communities and refugees, [...] States and relevant stakeholders will contribute resources and expertise to promote economic opportunities, decent work, job creation and entrepreneurship programmes for host community members and refugees, including women, young adults, older persons and persons with disabilities” (UNHCR, 2021, p. 38),

is the most relevant in the context of this thesis, and the following therefore briefly outlines its intended outcomes and indicators. The first intended outcome of the second objective (2.1) is that refugees are able to actively participate in the social and economic life of host countries and has two main indicators: on the one hand the proportion of refugees with access to decent work and on the other hand the proportion of refugees with freedom of movement in the host country (UNHCR, 2021). Objective two, and outcome 2.1, thereby refer to the 1951 Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees, which recognizes refugees’ need for access to decent work and urges access to paid

employment, self-employment, and the practice of liberal professions, as well as to labor rights and social protection (UNHCR, 2021). Moreover, decent work is defined as:

“work that is productive and delivers a fair income; security in the workplace; social protection for families; prospects for personal development and social integration; freedom for people to express their concerns, organize and participate in decisions that affect their lives; and equality of opportunity and treatment for people of all genders”. (UNHCR, 2021, p. 39)

In this context, however, it should be noted that the above-described indicators developed by UNHCR do not measure the situation on the ground or actual practices, but only take into account the legal (de jure) situation of refugees in terms of access to decent work and freedom of movement, which could differ greatly from the actual situation (UNHCR, 2021).

The second intended outcome of the second objective (2.2) is to strengthen refugee and host community self-reliance and is measured by the following two indicators: first, the proportion of refugee children enrolled in the national education system, both primary and secondary. Second, the proportion of refugee and host community populations living below the national poverty line of the host community. Regarding indicator one, it is important to note that refugee girls are still less likely to have access to education than refugee boys, and therefore, gender equality plays a key role for the success of the GCR and CRRF. It is also important to note that while the indicator measures the enrollment rate of refugee children, it does not consider their performance or success as there is little disaggregated data by protection status available in the context of education. Thereby, this indicator provides limited information and can only to some extent give insight into the level and success of the education available to refugee children. In regard to indicator two, one should note that there is a persistent gap between the economic well-being of refugees and host populations, and that both groups have experienced deteriorating circumstances due to the Covid-19 pandemic (UNHCR, 2021).

Moreover, it should be noted that the international community has recognized the need to enhance refugee self-reliance and the significant role it plays for developing sustainable solutions to displacement. This could be observed in the Global Refugee Forum in 2019, where new pledges towards the achievement of the goals outlined in the GCR were made, of which 31 per cent relate to GCR objective two to enhance refugee self-reliance (UNHCR, 2021). However, providing adequate jobs, livelihoods and training to refugees remains a challenge, and has been further aggravated through the pandemic which caused general economic downturn (UNHCR, 2021). Lastly, in light of indicator two of objective one, it remains to be pointed out, that while the international community, and in particular UNHCR, committed itself to the Age, Gender and Diversity Approach (as described

earlier), this has only been implemented in a limited way and more than two thirds of the pledges made at the Global Refugee Forum did not take it into account despite its importance for the achievement of refugee self-reliance amongst all societal groups (UNHCR, 2021).

To end this section on the CRRF, the GCR, and the achievement of objective two, the self-reliance of refugees, one should note, that while a lot of work towards this end remains, a number of states have already revisited or are currently revisiting their laws and policies in order to support the social and economic inclusion of refugees and their self-reliance, and ensure their rights are being met (UNHCR, 2018d). In this context, particular attention has been put on the education of refugees and a number of states, with the support of the international community, have already increased the inclusion of refugee children in their national education systems (UNHCR, 2018d).

5.2.2.5 The Syrian Regional Refugee Response Plan and the Regional Refugee and Resilience Plan

Refugee response plans take a key role in the evaluation of the thesis' research topic. Refugee response plans are of supportive character, they are developed by UNHCR in cooperation with affected governments in response to specific large and complex refugee situations to help host governments to protect affected people (UNHCR, n.d.c). Their general idea is to support inter-agency responses to refugee situations by serving as a tool for better coordination as well as by providing a broad response and overarching vision. They also aid in the implementation of strategies and measures through international cooperation and raise awareness for refugee situations and thereby help to gain further (financial) support (UNHCR, n.d.c). The first Syrian Regional Refugee Response Plan (RRP) was established following the Syrian displacement in 2012 to address the needs of displaced people in the neighboring countries of the region, including Lebanon, Jordan, Türkiye, Iraq, and later Egypt, with a coordinated, cross-agency approach (UNHCR, n.d.c). Like country-specific refugee response plans, RRP's aid the affected countries and UNHCR to better coordinate aid and provide a coherent vision across borders. While states remain the ones in primary charge in defining a refugee response, in line with an everyday approach, RRP's strengthen the implementation of these national strategies through the cooperation of a wide range of actors, including governments, international organizations, and other stakeholders. Moreover, they are used to define and formulate priority actions to be implemented in order to aid refugees and host communities alike. In line with the GCR, RRP's involve a diverse range of actors to achieve a stronger stance in the international community, broader cooperation, and greater support, leading to a more adapted, accessible, and inclusive refugee response and thereby challenging the supremacy of states (UNHCR, 2022e).

In light of the Syrian refugee situation in Jordan, UNHCR and national actors defined six main objectives to concentrate on. These objectives span over a broad range of fields, and include the social, economic, and legal empowerment of refugees through adequate provision of information on the availability of basic services, capacity building and life-skill development activities which could positively influence the everyday experiences of refugees and provide more possibilities for the exercise of agency. Further, they comprise legal services such as referrals and awareness raising workshops and the dissemination of materials on protection, in particular child protection, sexual and gender-based violence (SGBV), and psychosocial support. In addition, advocacy for basic freedoms, such as freedom of movement for all those entering the country, was defined as a priority area as was recreation and life skills activities for women, children, youth, and men, in cooperation with civil society actors (Wali, 2020).

In 2015, due to the protracted nature of the Syrian refugee crisis and the challenges faced by the host communities and countries, the UNHCR expanded the Syrian Regional Refugee Response Plan (RRP) to the Regional Refugee and Resilience Plan (3RP). The 3RP, under co-leadership of UNHCR and UNDP, brought together the national plans and priorities of the major hosting countries receiving Syrian refugees including Egypt, Iraq, Jordan, Lebanon, and Türkiye (UNHCR, 2022e). The 3RP comprises one regional plan with five country chapters and aims to combine the humanitarian and the development responses to the Syrian refugee crisis and thereby constitutes a paradigm shift of the international community which had previously addressed these two fields separately (UNHCR, 2022e). The following provides an insight into the general aims and ideas of the 3RP, while a section on the Jordan Response Plan for the Syria Crisis follows later in this chapter.

As its name suggests, the 3RP aims at a more comprehensive approach and has two components: it aims to ensure that the protection and humanitarian assistance needs of refugees are met but also emphasizes and strengthens the resilience, stabilization and development needs of the affected communities and institutions (Mencutek & Nashwan, 2023). It brings together major international actors, like UNHCR and UNDP, international agencies, governments, and national actors, including ministries, as well as national and local agencies of the five countries, international and national NGOs, and other relevant stakeholders. Thereby, it provides a broad platform for exchange, joint coordination, and concerted planning for the response to the Syrian refugee crisis and follows an approach that recognizes the significance of a broad range of actors for the development and successful implementation of policies (Mencutek & Nashwan, 2023). This not only facilitates better consultation and alignment among different actors, but also greater advocacy and awareness of the crisis, and hence, more comprehensive support that can alleviate pressure on already stressed national

systems while ensuring the needs of refugees and host communities are consistently met (3RP, 2023). Overall, the 3RP outlines four main strategic directions: Protecting people (1), Pursuing Durable Solutions (2), Supporting Dignified Lives (3) and Enhancing National and Local Capacities (4) (UNHCR, 2022e). Thus, the immediate humanitarian and protection needs of the refugee population, and the long-term needs and development goals of the refugee and host communities are addressed by strengthening collaboration and complementarity. This ensures more predictable responsibility sharing, reduces overall vulnerability, strengthens capacities, and addresses root causes of conflict and displacement (3RP, 2023; UN, 2020).

In the context of this thesis, it is sensible to divide the concrete terms and aims of the 3RP into three sections: economic empowerment, access to services and legal empowerment. In regard to economic empowerment, the 3RP on the one hand aims to strengthen the resilience of the host country through business development services, and on the other hand the resilience of individuals through the creation of income generating activities. With regard to the first objective, the 3RP supports national actors to identify customers, expand market connections, and leverage digital solutions by investing in e-commerce, digital platforms, and other online activities to spur business and create more opportunities locally (3RP, 2023). With respect to the latter, the 3RP aims to increase individual self-reliance and independence through livelihood projects, including language and skills training, internships and on-the-job-training, as well as businesses outreach and support for Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises (MSMEs) and cooperatives (3RP, 2023). Moreover, the 3RP aims to increase the provision of work documentation through adapted advocacy and policy engagement and to match refugees' skills with demands and needs of the local market to benefit both, the local community, as well as the refugees (3RP, 2023). Related to this, the 3RP encourages broader recognition and additional provision of trainings and certification, as well as education and qualification (3RP, 2023).

Regarding the access to services, in line with the SDGs' overarching goal of leaving no one behind, the 3RP commits to working with all relevant stakeholders, including national governments and public institutions, international and national NGOs and the private sector, to ensure equitable access to essential services, such as protection, education, health care and social welfare, for both (Syrian) refugees and the host populations (3RP, 2023). The 3RP aims to strengthen national capacities and institutions to provide protection and substantive social and economic services. Moreover, it intends to create a supportive legal framework and conducive environment to improve refugees' access to sustainable services. This is also aimed at enhancing their prospects, and improving their well-being and employability, and thereby ensuring a decent and dignified standard of living (3RP, 2023).

Finally, in terms of legal empowerment, the 3RP relies on a community-based approach to improve access to information and services. With this it aims to increase refugees' knowledge of their rights and the services available to them. In doing so, the 3RP hopes to improve registration and civil documentation, as well as compliance with basic human rights. Furthermore, it is aimed at reducing exploitation, harmful coping mechanisms and conflict within the refugee community, as well as between refugee and host communities (3RP, 2023). With these aims, the 3RP embraces many of the key principles laid out in other frameworks, including the CRRF (UNHCR, 2018d).

Since its inception, the 3RP has mobilized more than 21 billion US-dollars and brought together more than 270 partners from humanitarian and development organizations. This has enabled it to forward its objectives of promoting a sustainable, large-scale approach to the Syrian refugee crisis and its impact on host communities (UNHCR, 2022e). Moreover, through digital and in-person involvement of a range of actors of diverse backgrounds during the planning, programming, implementation, and feedback processes, the 3RP has increased refugee and host community participation in processes affecting their situation and thereby strengthened its own accountability (3RP, 2023).

Thus, throughout its interventions, the 3RP remains strongly committed to the "Accountability to affected populations", rights-based and participatory approaches, and is actively involved in fostering local participation and national ownership of the programs (3RP, 2023; UN, 2020). If successfully implemented the 3RP could have significant impact on refugees' everyday lives by fostering their agency and the ways in which refugees can shape their own circumstances. In this way, the 3RP challenges the prevailing perception of refugees as passive victims without reasoning capacity, as well as established approaches to refugee policy that focus on institutions and states as the main actors. In line with its approaches, the 3RP has also developed strong accountability and monitoring frameworks intended to ensure adequate participation and action, and guarantee the overarching goals, of meeting the needs of refugees and their host communities (3RP, 2023; UN 2020). However, despite these successes, increasing needs of refugees and host communities in light of newly evolving and persisting crises, such as displacement due to climate change, ongoing and newly arising conflicts as well as the Covid-19 pandemic, further challenge the international community and other actors in meeting their responsibilities and the needs of refugee and host country populations.

5.2.3 Jordan's Legal System and Refugee Policy

Having explained the international context in detail above, the following gives more insight into Jordan's general refugee policies and their impact, specifically those regarding the sectors health, legal and economic empowerment, and education.

5.2.3.1 Access to Services and the Empowerment of Refugees

Jordan has, throughout its history, been an important actor in the international migration field, and has a long history of hosting refugees on the basis of solidarity, hospitality, and indigenous norms as well as of designing (refugee) inclusive development policies (Bellamy et al., 2017; IHD, n.d.). This has become particularly evident in the reception of Palestinian refugees and the extensive rights granted to them, which in conjunction with the unresolved Palestinian question, however, also has a sustained impact on Jordan's refugee policy and the country's approach to refugee movements.

In the current refugee context, Jordan also plays a vital role, in particular with regards to the displacement of Syrians due to the civil war in their home country. Moreover, however, Jordan has also placed great emphasis on its national security and has, throughout the years, adapted an extensive understanding of security issues, including refugees as possible threats. Thus, while Jordan provides shelter to at least 661,000 Syrians and curtails their onward movement to Europe, it has also emphasized security concerns and made clear that it cannot continuously host large numbers of refugees without international support. Therefore, international agreements have been made which guarantee external aid to Jordan, which has, for much of its history, been a semi-rentier state taking advantage of its strategic geo-political position and relying on international aid, especially in light of the lack of other, such as natural, resources (Tsourapas, 2022). This ties in with decolonial theory as Jordan and its economy continue to be affected by historical and structural disadvantages stemming from colonial structures. Furthermore, Jordan, has adapted a dual approach to refugees, on the one hand providing humanitarian care, while on the other hand governing refugees in a highly securitized manner, meaning that while for example camps have been established to provide shelter and fulfill the basic needs of refugees, they have also been established to condemn refugees, restrict their movement and increase surveillance and control (Pasha, 2021a, 2021b). This dual approach is also related to the country's experience with Palestinian and Iraqi refugees and has increasingly led to a blurring of welcome policy and containment policy, aimed to secure the external borders, and guarantee internal security (Pasha, 2021b).

As outlined above, Jordan is not a party to most of the international refugee agreements, but it is a party to some major human rights instruments and treaties that include obligations similar to the 1951 Refugee Convention (Akram et al., 2015). These include the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights which in Article 2 (1) guarantees that

“Each State Party to the present Covenant undertakes to respect and to ensure to all individuals within its territory and subject to its jurisdiction the rights recognized in the present

Covenant, without distinction of any kind, such as race, colour, sex, language, religion, political or other opinion, national or social origin, property, birth or other status” (UN, 1967, p. 2)

as well as the International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination which states Jordan’s obligation to guarantee equal human rights to non-citizens within its territory as it does to its citizens, and consequently, equal protection and equal recognition before the law (Riach & James, 2016).

However, Jordan has, on a national basis, not established a coherent legal framework for refugees and asylum seekers which is partly due to the unresolved Palestinian question, and related concerns about the status of Palestinian refugees in Jordan. The only domestic law referring to refugees, is Law No. 24 of 1973 which concerns Residency and Foreigners’ Affairs and does not establish any framework or concrete measures regarding protection, asylum, or refugee status and rights (Burlin, 2019; Wali 2020). Regarding the status of refugees in Jordan, refugees are legally considered as asylum seekers once they have successfully applied for status determination but will only become referred to as refugees once resettlement to a third country has been agreed upon (Akram et al., 2015). Moreover, refugees in Jordan generally have no rights to residency, employment, public education, or health care and are, like any other foreigner in Jordan, required to acquire a residency permit, which in most cases, is valid for one year (Mayer, 2016).

Overall, refugees in Jordan have no guarantee that their rights will be protected and are confronted with inconsistency, uncertainty and varying implementation and interpretation of policies (Akram et al., 2015; Pasha, 2021b). Their rights are often restricted by accommodating them in closed or semi-closed camps, which greatly limit their movement, as well as by not allowing them to take on any or only specific types of income-generating work which prevents them from becoming self-reliant and integrating into the local society (Crisp, 2009). These restrictions also limit refugees’ exercise of free will and choice as to where they want to live, what they want to work and how they want to design their everyday life, thereby starkly impacting their exercise of agency (Akram et al., 2015).

Jordan has often been criticized in the past due to the prevailing sentiment against the integration of refugees, and widespread misinformation about the social and economic burden and the impact of refugees on national security (Wali, 2020). Furthermore, international organizations, including the ILO, have often criticized Jordan for not creating a clear framework that guarantees coherent protection and rights for refugees. This leads to increased vulnerability and uncertainty, as well as to marginalization and discrimination of refugees compared to other residents of the country. It also raises questions about the respect for human rights, particularly as Jordan abdicates any legal

responsibility (ILO, 2015a). This is exacerbated by the fact that certain measures taken by the Jordanian government, such as resorting to deportations as a means of controlling unwelcome and rebellious camp residents or people who take up work illegally, are in clear violation of legal frameworks and the principle of non-refoulement (Akram et al., 2015; ILO, 2015a).

This lack of legal framework was further exacerbated with the Syrian refugee crisis and the influx of thousands of refugees which not only posed challenges to respond adequately, effectively and in time, but also posed longer-term challenges to the socio-economic sphere as well as to host communities (GoJ, 2020; JNCW, 2017). Thus, the influx of refugees added pressure on the country's already ailing social, economic, institutional, and natural resources, causing further economic deficit, and increasing expenditures (GoJ, 2020). With time, the needs of refugees and host communities have thus shifted from immediate humanitarian care to medium to long-term responses, requiring more effective response plans and longer-term projects to ensure adequate infrastructure, public service delivery, and economic opportunities (GoJ, 2020).

In recent years however, with the refugee situation becoming protracted, international funding has started to decrease and has negatively affected refugees and their access to services (Alnewashi, 2019; GoJ, 2020). Even though the government has eased Syrian's restrictions to work, the lack of legal and civil documentation, the fragmented and limited access to social protection and the insecure legal framework, means that Syrian refugees remain vulnerable and face numerous protection challenges (Alnewashi, 2019; GoJ, 2020). Many Syrian refugees still lack access to self-sufficiency and cannot meet their most basic needs such as shelter, food, water, and sanitation. Moreover, issues remain with the inclusion of marginalized groups such as the elderly or disabled people, as well as regarding work right violations including child labor, SGBV, and mental health and psychosocial issues (GoJ, 2020). Therefore, the Jordanian government has introduced a "Basic Needs" program aimed at improving self-reliance, reducing negative coping mechanisms, and developing relationships between refugees and host communities (GoJ, 2020). This program could positively impact refugees' everyday circumstances, foster the inclusion of marginalized groups, and enhance their participation in host communities. This would further benefit refugees' exercise of agency and emphasize how refugees, like other common people, play a part in the social and political order despite structural restrictions.

Having considered the concerns and negative effects of Jordan's insufficient refugee policy, the following provides a more detailed insight into specific aspects of Jordan's refugee policy. It starts by briefly describing the legal terms of refugees' access to health services and continues with a detailed overview of refugees' legal empowerment, economic empowerment, and education. In principle, refugees in Jordan have access to all of these basic services, but in practice, levels of access

can vary greatly and oftentimes, refugees' financial problems intersect with challenges to access health services, education, and adequate housing (Bellamy et al., 2017; Mencuttek & Nashwan, 2023).

In the area of healthcare, the Jordanian government originally pursued a generous policy and granted refugees access to the Ministry of Health's public healthcare services for primary and secondary as well as maternity, infant, and obstetric care at the same rate as locals. However, in November 2014, the government decided to change its policy and from then on charged refugees the same rates as uninsured Jordanians, which still meant a subsidy of 80 per cent. In February 2018, however, the Jordanian government completely reversed its health policy and now required refugees to pay 80 per cent of the tariff paid by other foreigners in public health facilities, with the exception of maternity and children's centers (Dajani Consulting, 2018; WHO, 2023).

In regard to legal empowerment, it is important to keep the varying governance structures across the local and national levels in mind which may lead to differing structural limitations for the exercise of agency. Norms and legal frameworks or laws may be interpreted and applied differently depending on the level and those in charge causing additional insecurity and uncertainty regarding the application of legal standards and norms (Riach & James, 2016). This is further aggravated by the overburdened legal system, including courthouses and legal consultations, in Jordan, which are not only under-funded but also understaffed (Riach & James, 2016).

Moreover, asylum in the legal sense as known from the European context does not exist in Jordan and as already mentioned above, refugees are not recognized as such by the Jordanian authorities but are referred to in terms like "visitors" or "guests" which have no legal meaning and provide no legal protection or rights under Jordanian law (Alnewashi, 2019; Schön et al., 2017; Zechner, 2016). In addition, while some agreements have been made with international partners, and national regulations and guidelines have been established, their effectiveness and implementation are severally lacking due to constraints such as limited resources and cultural relativism, which has led to a dichotomy between the law, and the situation on the ground (Riach & James, 2016). This severely impacts the everyday circumstances of refugees, who experience uncertainty, lack protection, and are additionally marginalized through the lack of legal status.

Furthermore, refugees are oftentimes not aware of the legal frameworks and regulations applicable to their situation or case, as there is little to no provision of legal aid services due to a lack of staff and funding (Riach & James, 2016). This is particularly alerting given the vulnerability of refugees, and when looking at the issue from an intersectional perspective, as women, children and other marginalized groups are particularly affected by a lack of legal aid services and provision of clear

and adequate information (GoJ, 2020). Thus, many refugees are neither aware of their rights, nor their obligations and responsibilities, and many end up breaking the law unintentionally by not being aware that what they are doing is against the law (GoJ, 2020). Even though Jordanian authorities have initiated attempts to alleviate these issues by amongst other things creating Shari'a courts in refugee camps and increasing information services, legal issues persist, and refugees continue experiencing uncertainty and a lack of reliable information (GoJ, 2020).

Besides legal empowerment, economic empowerment plays a significant role in the context of agency. It yields an income and provides the refugees with greater independence, a feeling of autonomy and dignity, a meaningful occupation as well as some normalcy in their situation of displacement. Moreover, it supports integration in the local society, increases exchange between host societies and refugees, and can potentially create better bonds and counteract prejudices and exclusion. By becoming economically active, refugees can overcome the common perception of them as voiceless beneficiaries, kept on the margins of society without the possibility of participation and meaningful contribution, and thus, play an active role in society. This is linked to an everyday approach, which emphasizes the importance of everyday activities which, over time, can influence larger structures and counteract widely held beliefs.

The importance of employment has also been recognized in various international frameworks, including the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. Nevertheless, Jordan has enforced restrictions on Syrian refugees' right to work due to economic, societal, and political concerns. Many people worry that the high numbers of refugees, and the subsequent higher numbers of available workers, could lead to increased competition, lower wages, and higher unemployment rates amongst locals (Mencutek & Nashwan, 2021). Therefore, refugees' legal right to work has been a very controversial topic. It is on the one hand recognized as a prerequisite for local integration and self-reliance, but on the other hand seen as a threat to the local economy and local employment. Therefore, it has caused the government great struggle in balancing opportunities for refugees with the need to overcome national unemployment (Bellamy et al., 2017; Mencutek & Nashwan, 2021).

Legally obtaining a job in Jordan as a refugee is targeted with several restrictions and in the early years of the Syrian refugee crisis unemployment rates were remarkably high, reaching 61 per cent in 2015 (Yahya et al., 2018). One of the holdbacks for becoming legally employed is Jordan's 1952 constitution which in Article 23 states that the right to work is reserved exclusively to Jordanian citizens, and that non-Jordanian workers have to be approved by the Minister of Labor and obtain a work permit to legally access jobs (ILO, 2015a). Obtaining a work permit on the other hand requires a valid Ministry of Interior service card, which means that legal employment in Jordan is not only

associated with legal constraints, but also with bureaucratic hurdles (Mencutek & Nashwan, 2023; Yaha et al., 2018). In addition, obtaining these permits used to be associated with excessive costs, adding yet another layer of barrier to legal employment. While the Ministry of Labor waived these costs in 2016, informal fees and hidden costs remain and restrict Syrian refugees from obtaining work permits (Gordon, 2017). Furthermore, even after obtaining a work permit, it remains difficult to find legal employment in Jordan, both due to the high unemployment rate of 23 per cent and due to a quote for employers, according to which no more than 30 per cent of employees may be Syrian (Alnewashi, 2019; UNHCR, 2022d).

In addition, even once refugees find legal employment, the lack of legal rights and official regulations puts them in a vulnerable and dependent position and increases power hierarchies between refugees and their employers. These issues and the difficulties involved with obtaining legal work in the first place have led many refugees to look for work in the informal sector and to take on illegal work occupations. However, conditions in the informal sector are characterized by risks of exploitation, low pay and often, harassment and discrimination (Bellamy et al., 2017). Moreover, the lack of affordable means of public transportation constrains Syrian refugees' access to commercial centers and industrial zones, and finding jobs that match their skills and experiences remains challenging. This is the case for both the formal and the informal sector and hence, prevents refugees from finding income-generating opportunities (GoJ, 2020).

Manifold issues regarding restrictions on economic opportunities and the possibilities to find decent work remain. These include a lack of (successful) economic empowerment through the law, and non-beneficial regulations and conditions on the ground which lead to a lack of income resulting in financial hardship or even in poverty. It thereby increases vulnerability and disempowers refugees, preventing them from reaching their full potential, from participating in society, as well as from providing for themselves and their families. Moreover, it decreases access to services such as health care and has severe effects on their physical and mental well-being, self-confidence, and dignity (Riach & James, 2016). Furthermore, economic empowerment or the lack thereof, should not be seen in isolation, but its ties to other aspects of life, and relation to other issues, should be emphasized. Economic empowerment is for example, one of the main challenges for women's empowerment and in addition, increases refugees' uncertainty and prevents them from planning for their future and from moving forward to establish a decent life (GoJ, 2020; Riach & James, 2016).

Given the severe effects of a lack of economic empowerment and considering the negative effects of high unemployment rates on the country, including the associated financial burden, access to labor markets and economic empowerment should be a priority for the government and other stakeholders.

This would not only reduce the need for humanitarian aid and cash assistance, but also positively contribute to refugees' integration into host communities and thereby improve social cohesion and reduce conflict and dissatisfaction. Better integration would also strengthen refugees' participation in host societies, allowing them to take a more active role in shaping society and positively influence their own circumstances. Economic empowerment should therefore not be viewed in isolation, nor should only the economic benefits be considered. Rather, with regard to the everyday approach, it should be viewed holistically, emphasizing the impact everyday interactions through economic participation can have on larger structures, including both the social and political spheres. The benefits of allowing refugees to work have increasingly been recognized in Jordan and different stakeholders have actively worked on the provision of economic opportunities and on measures for refugees' economic empowerment.

Thus, since mid-2013, Jordan has joined the ILO project "Enhancing Access to Employment Opportunities and Livelihoods in Host Communities" to foster the local economic development through the creation of new employment opportunities with technical assistance by the ILO and its partners (ILO, 2015a). Moreover, in April 2015, the Jordanian government started a process to legalize the traditional market economy in Za'atari refugee camp, providing work and income for a substantial number of the camp's residents. In 2016, with the Jordan Compact, additional measures were taken to ease restrictions on refugees' employment and improve work conditions in exchange for more EU support and facilitations in the EU-Jordan trade (Pasha, 2020; Yahya et al., 2018). These additional measures included the waiving of medical examinations and as mentioned above, work permit fees, which at the time were as high as two months minimum income (Yahya et al., 2018). Moreover, the Jordanian government agreed to allow Syrian refugees to work in a greater number of employment sectors, to formalize their already existing businesses and to create avenues for the registration of new tax-generating businesses (GoJ, 2016; UNHCR, 2022d).

Furthermore, 2016 saw the introduction of the Partnership for Prospects Program (P4P), a UN initiative that provides economic prospects for both refugees and host societies, through short-term employment opportunities, the provision of vocational training opportunities and the financing of education (UNHCR, n.d.d). The P4P also links employment opportunities to investment in public infrastructure improvements to support long-term development in the affected regions, and contributes to the goals of the GCR, specifically goal one, easing pressure on host communities, and goal two, enhancing refugee self-reliance (UNHCR, n.d.d).

In 2017, the Ministry of Labor, in cooperation with the ILO, established a new policy which de-linked work permits in the agricultural sector from specific employers, allowing for more fluid employment,

and extended the right to apply for Syrian work permits to cooperatives (ILO, 2017). A year later, in 2018, Syrians were given the right to register home-based businesses in food processing, tailoring, and handicrafts, which made it easier to combine income-generating activities with family and other responsibilities, especially given the poor, costly and time-consuming commutes to many other workplaces (GoJ, 2020). This was also a crucial step for the empowerment of women, who continue to take on the majority of CARE activities and have therefore oftentimes been unable to participate in the formal work sector. Furthermore, in 2021, Jordan further expanded the sectors for which Syrians can obtain work permits, to include all those open to non-Jordanians, including work in the service and sale sector, in crafts, and in basic industries, as skilled agricultural, forestry and fishery, as well as plant and machine workers (UNHCR, 2022d).

Overall, the improved legal framework, the expansion of work sectors as well as programs such as cash-for-work, which in 2019 benefitted around 16,000 people through short term work opportunities, and better use of funding, for example to increase opportunities for decent work and protection standards, have greatly strengthened refugees' economic opportunities and demonstrated the government's support of Syrian refugees' self-reliance. Nevertheless, a number of obstacles and restrictions remain in place, including high social security contributions, limitations to available work sectors, as well as questionable working conditions and issues such as discrimination and exploitation (Yahya et al., 2018).

The last part of this section on Jordan's regulations regarding access to services and its contributions to empowerment of Syrian refugees considers the education policy for refugees in Jordan.

As already mentioned, some initiatives to improve funding for education and vocational training in countries of the region affected by the Syrian refugee crisis, amongst others through the P4P, have been in place. In the context of Jordan, the government has generally adapted a very supportive and inclusive education policy. It has put a special focus on the education of refugees from the outset of the crisis and has been trying to provide free, inclusive, and quality access to public schools for Syrian refugee children, no matter their legal status (GoJ, 2020). Thus, the Jordanian Ministry of Education with support of other stakeholders, consistently tried to enhance and increase access to public schools and to improve refugees' educational situation by creating safe, inclusive, and tolerant environments and providing psychosocial support to students. However, while 96.6 per cent of Jordanian children attend grades one to ten, only 86.6 per cent of Syrian refugees do so. In grades eleven and twelve, the differences in school attendance between Jordanian and Syrian youths are even greater with 74.4 per cent of the former and only 30 per cent of the latter attending school (GoJ, 2020).

As has become clear, the Jordanian government has introduced a number of changes since the start of the Syrian refugee crisis and has been relatively responsive to it and put in place measures for better support and inclusion (Human Development, n.d.). However, while the country is very inclusive and supportive to refugees when it comes to education, and has, to some extent, tried to improve refugees' economic opportunities, many restrictions and disparities remain even in these two sectors. Moreover, this inclusive approach does not apply to the health care sector, in which Jordan has adopted increasingly restrictive policies and increased the costs that need to be paid by refugees themselves, thereby limiting their access to adequate health care, and causing financial burden to families and individuals in need of treatment.

5.2.4 Jordanian Frameworks

Having provided a general overview of the legal framework affecting refugees' access to social services and employment, the next section focuses on two concrete plans established for Jordan in response to the Syrian conflict. It starts with an overview of the Jordan Compact and ends with a brief discussion of the Jordan Response Plan for the Syria Crisis.

5.2.4.1 *The Jordan Compact*

When refugees started arriving in Europe in large numbers in 2015, the EU, realizing that the crisis was of more permanent nature, shifted its approach to the crisis from a traditional humanitarian approach to one focused on empowerment and development. Thus, it urged states in the region, including Jordan, Lebanon, and Türkiye, to improve their legal frameworks and the rights granted to refugees (Bank & Fröhlich, 2021; Mencutec & Nashwan, 2021). It was believed that improving the situation for refugees in the region, by providing them with more opportunities and guaranteed rights, would encourage refugees to stay in their first host country rather than seeking asylum in Europe. This is intricately linked to the legacy of colonialism and the power structures between the Global North and the Global South that still exist and continue to shape the interactions between Jordan and the international community. Rather than addressing the underlying structural problems and root causes contributing to the onward migration of refugees from the Global South to the Global North, the international community focused on containing and controlling refugees in the Global South in order to limit the impact of refugees on countries of the Global North.

On 4 February 2016, the EU, and countries of the region affected by the Syrian conflict, held a donors' conference for Syria in London during which a multi-stakeholder policy document, the Jordan Compact, was established between the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan and the International

Community (De Bel-Air, 2016; Mencutek & Nashwan, 2021). Its aim was to address the Syrian refugee crisis with an innovative approach focused on development and consisting of a number of macro-economic programs, access-oriented initiatives, and supply-side interventions (Burlin, 2019; GoJ, 2016). In this sense, the Jordan Compact saw the Syrian refugee crisis as an opportunity for development and for the improvement of Jordan's economic stance and labor market through foreign investment and better access to EU markets. This was to be guaranteed through simplified rules of origin, the development of new jobs, the rebuilding of host communities and increased financial support through the international community as well as soft loans through the World Bank Group (Burlin, 2019; GoJ, 2016). Thereby, multiple aims were approached, including the stop of Syrians' onward movement to Europe, economic opportunities for Jordan, improvements for the Syrian refugees within Jordan, as well as a prioritization of local host communities to decrease resentment. Overall, the Jordan Compact had three broader aims, development, rebuilding Jordanian host communities and mobilizing funding (Tsourapas, 2022).

The Jordan Compact thereby constitutes a significant example of the persistent colonial power structures and systems of oppression discussed in the theoretical framework. It illustrates the complicated power dynamics between Jordan and the international community that fostered negotiations aimed at addressing both the concerns of the Global North regarding the refugee influx and the economic needs of Jordan, while deferring the stated objective of achieving improved care for refugees. As such, the Jordan Compact raises fundamental questions about the nature of international agreements on migration and refugees. Rather than primarily addressing the plight of refugees, such agreements seem to prioritize the interests and objectives of the parties involved. Thereby, such agreements reveal a deeper entrenchment of power dynamics that further impedes the empowerment of refugees and their possibilities to exercise agency.

The following discusses the specific aims and measures of the Jordan Compact, as well as its relevance, and concludes with an assessment and recommendations for the future.

The Jordan Compact can be described as a trade agreement between Jordan and the EU, whereby Jordan promises to reduce restrictions imposed on refugees' right to work, provide 200,000 work permits to Syrian refugees over three to five years in the sectors allowed to migrant workers (mainly agriculture, construction, tourism, and manufactured goods), as well as to provide formal education, including vocational training opportunities, to Syrian refugees, in exchange for low-interest loans, humanitarian aid, and relaxed trade rules (Bank & Fröhlich, 2021; Mencutek & Nashwan, 2021). Thus, the compact provided tariff free access to European markets as well as eased rules of origin for imports for businesses which employed a certain proportion of Syrian refugees and produced in one

of the 18 designated Special Economic Zones and industrial areas in Jordan, in order to stimulate exports (Betts et al., 2017). Considering Jordan's commitments, the country agreed to lift regulatory barriers for refugee businesses and economic activities in and outside of refugee camps, as well as to allow refugees to formalize their already established businesses and set up new, tax-generating ones (JNCW, 2017). The government also lowered the costs for low-skilled work permits and started issuing them without ties to specific employers, allowing Syrian refugees to switch more easily between different employers (JNCW, 2017). However, some restrictions persisted, as Jordan was concerned about unemployment rates amongst nationals, and therefore restricted the areas Syrians were allowed to work in, to the above-mentioned specific sectors as well as qualified industrial zones, refugee camps and to positions in municipal public work funded by the international donor community (Mencutek & Nashwan, 2021).

In the eyes of the EU, Jordan's demands for financial support and improved trade relations in exchange for continuing to host refugees, were seen as legitimized, given the impact the large number of refugees had and continues to have on the country, and considering the effects the conflict had on Jordanian trade and economic performance (Mencutek & Nashwan, 2021). The commitments on part of Jordan were also seen as a crucial step for the advancement of refugee rights. It was hoped that the formalization of their work would help reduce exploitation and provide them with work rights such as minimum wage, social security, and better protection, thereby achieving a more sustainable situation for refugees in Jordan (Betts et al., 2017; Gordon, 2017; Tsourapas, 2022).

Overall, the Jordan Compact can be described as resilience-oriented and focused on livelihoods, education, and the self-reliance, and consequently the integration, of Syrian refugees (Bank & Fröhlich, 2021; Mencutek & Nashwan, 2021). It constitutes a new paradigm in displacement management, takes a step away from the traditional focus on humanitarian assistance and towards economic development and is therefore, often seen as a test case for a novel approach to protracted crises (Bank & Fröhlich, 2021; Burlin, 2019; Gordon, 2017). The compact has been described as an innovative success for both the economic development of host communities, as well as the advancement for the self-reliance of refugees (Mencutek & Nashwan, 2021). However, it has also been criticized, among other things, for its non-binding policies and the fact that the EU caved into Jordanian demands to interrupt the flow of refugees arriving in Europe, and both the EU as well as Jordan, being mainly motivated by economic and other incentives rather than by their responsibilities to comply with international law. Moreover, the compact has been criticized for its limited outcomes and benefits to the situation on the ground, which is discussed in more detail in the next section.

Despite the high praise for the Jordan Compact, it has not fulfilled expectations and significant issues persist, including low economic output, but also persisting low enrolment rates in schools (Burlin, 2019; DRC et al., 2017). While enrolment rates rose for refugees aged 14 to 15 from 2016 to 2018, there were no such changes in secondary or higher education (Burlin, 2019). Therefore, the donor community and the Jordanian government have reemphasized the importance of quality education for all, especially vulnerable populations, and marginalized groups. They committed to strengthen the education system and ensure the retention of students through better management and attendance monitoring, as well as to better adapt the educational system to refugee communities through remedial education and new strategies addressing violence in and around schools (DRC et al., 2017).

Regarding the compact's impact on employment, it can be noted that it was the most successful in the establishment of legalization schemes for refugees and the formalization of businesses (Burlin, 2019). Thus, from January 2016 to April 2019, 142,520 work permits were issued by the Ministry of Labor, and in March 2022, around 41 per cent of Za'atari's and 30 per cent of Azraq's working-aged residents had permits (Mindset, 2022). However, in this context it is important to note, that this increase in working permits, does not amount to an equal amount of new employment opportunities or an equal decrease in the unemployment rate as these included renewals as well as new permits in relation to a change of workplace (Mencutek & Nashwan, 2021; Tsourapas, 2022). In fact, the creation of new employment opportunities for refugees and the decrease of unemployment has proven to be more difficult than envisioned due to slow economic growth, nationwide high unemployment rates and the lack of international investments in the Jordanian business sector (Tsourapas, 2022). In line with this is the slow development of the Special Economic Zones which in May 2019 only saw the employment of 1,000 people, of which only 219 were Syrian refugees, despite the incentives provided by the international community for the employment of refugees in these sectors, and the provision of beneficial trade conditions (Bank & Fröhlich, 2021). Hence, while the Jordan Compact has led to the formalization of refugees' businesses and easier pathways to work permits, many refugees continue to work in the informal sector and there is little evidence of improvement in regard to economic empowerment and the protection of labor rights is minimal (IHD, n.d.; Mindset, 2022).

As follows, the Jordan Compact has had minor impact on the well-being of Syrians, many of whom continue to suffer from socio-economic and other kinds of marginalization and a lack of empowerment (Burlin, 2019). Rather than improving the situation for refugees and the guarantee of their rights, the compact led to continued exploitation, discrimination, abuse, and unfavorable working conditions. These include harsh labor practices, low wages, and a lack of labor law protection, as well as increased competition for low-skilled work legally available to Syrian refugees,

who even if highly skilled, are legally not allowed to work outside the low-skilled labor sector (Burlin, 2019; Mencutek & Nashwan, 2021). Moreover, while the working conditions in the formal sector may be beneficial to (temporary) migrant workers, the conditions, as well as the wages in those sectors, are not sufficient to cover the costs of a whole family and have led to a dire situation for refugees with families (Mencutek & Nashwan, 2021).

In addition, the Jordan Compact has resulted in a resurgence of traditional gender roles, with men pursuing economic opportunities, while women stay at home and do unpaid care work or follow informal, poorly remunerated, and less safe informal work (Bank & Fröhlich, 2021). This is emphasized by the fact that while more than 50 per cent of Syrian refugees registered with UNHCR in Jordan are women, only about 19.5 per cent or about 11,000 of the 200,000 issued work permits by 2020, were held by women (Bank & Fröhlich, 2021). Furthermore, the compact has had a negative impact on other migrant groups such as Egyptians, Sudanese and South and Southeast Asians who face difficulties finding work. This is due to the fact that many of the jobs in sectors traditionally occupied by them, including construction, agriculture, manufacturing, wholesale, and retail, have been offered to Syrian refugees. Moreover, the Jordanian government implemented measures to restrict these other migrant groups' employment, thereby enhancing discrimination and further exacerbating their already precarious situation (Bank & Fröhlich, 2021; Tsourapas, 2022).

It has been argued that the failure of the compact to deliver the envisioned improvements for Syrian refugees was due to shortcomings in concrete implementation measures and regulatory frameworks, slow progress, as well as the unsuitability of the measures to the Jordanian labor market conditions and its particular challenges (Bank & Fröhlich, 2021; Mencutek & Nashwan, 2021; Wardeh & Marquez, 2023). Thus, according to some, the core features of Jordan's political economy and labor market, such as the importance of the informal labor market, were not considered and the economic climate was misjudged when revising the EU-Jordan trade agreement (Burlin, 2019). In addition, however, issues also included the lack of available work opportunities, employer's refusal to pay social security costs of employing refugees, as well as a general lack of trust between Syrian refugees and the Jordanian authorities (Bank & Fröhlich, 2021; Integral Development, n.d.; Wardeh & Marquez, 2023). As becomes clear, the implementation of the compact proved to be difficult, both due to bureaucratic burdens, but also due to refugees' hesitance to register with Jordanian authorities, to formalize their businesses and gain legal working rights. This was partially caused by a lack of information on the impacts of formalizing one's business, and a lack of knowledge regarding the impacts of obtaining legal employment. Many refugees feared that by opting for a work permit they

would lose international support or reduce their chances of resettlement, which they rejected in view of the poor living and working conditions in Jordan (IHD, n.d.; Mencutec & Nashwan, 2021).

Given this poor outcome, a number of recommendations have been made to improve the situation for Syrian refugees and further advance the goals set out in the Jordan Compact. Most notably, there was criticism of the lack of information about the formalization process and its impact on benefits, asylum status and legal protection, and many called for the provision of clear and credible information for refugees to make an informed decision. In this context, it should be noted, that UNHCR and ILO established employment centers in Azraq and Za'atari refugee camp to provide better labor rights information, offer services such as job matching and help with work permit applications, which are aspects that had also been criticized before (Mindset, 2022). Moreover, it was argued that the compact and its policies should be revised to better reflect the local context, including in terms of job creation and economic growth, as well as the needs of the refugee and local populations (Burlin, 2019). It has also been argued that economic growth should be accelerated, and the number of work permits raised to provide more opportunities to refugees (Burlin, 2019). To increase participation of refugees, it would also be beneficial to simplify the process for obtaining work permits and remove occupational restrictions such as those limiting work opportunities to specific sectors (Gordon, 2017). Finally, it was argued that relations between refugees and local authorities need to be improved in order to build trust and restore confidence in the local system and its services, which may be achieved through refugee-tailored service points and the reassurance of refugees' labor rights (Gordon, 2017).

These recommendations correspond to the principles of the everyday approach, as they aim to better reflect the local context and circumstances of refugees and the local population in Jordan and to respond to their needs in a sustainable matter. They address issues related to the implementation of the Compact at the grassroots level and take into account the perspectives of a wide range of actors, drawing attention to previously neglected aspects that could benefit the success of the Compact and hence, the well-being of refugees and the host society.

In conclusion, while the Jordan Compact had good intentions, it lacked adequate planning for the specific Jordanian context and was not prepared for local challenges such as high unemployment and poor economic growth. In addition, in the planning process, stakeholders did not account for the reluctance of refugees to formalize their businesses and apply for work permits, which could have been expected given previous experiences with the authorities, the general lack of a legal refugee framework and the Jordanian authorities' non-compliance with international law and basic human rights. While some of the goals of the Jordan Compact, such as the issuance of 220,000 work permits, have been achieved, the results have not met international expectations and the formalization of work

has not resulted in the expected improvements in workers' rights and the hoped-for reduction in exploitation and other problems. Therefore, a lot of work remains to be done to not only achieve the goals set out on paper, but actually achieve the situation on the ground that was envisioned. For this matter, a re-assessment of the compact as well as more effective, responsible, innovative, and harmonized measures, are needed (Gordon, 2017). In addition, better coordination between different stakeholders, and greater flexibility allowing for the readjustment of implemented and planned measures and programs should be a priority to improve the situation on the ground in a sustainable matter (Gordon, 2017).

5.2.4.2 The Jordan Response Plan for the Syria Crisis

For this last section, it remains to give an insight into the Jordan Response Plan for the Syria Crisis (JRP) which is Jordan's country chapter of the Regional Refugee and Resilience Plan (3RP) discussed previously. The first JRP was established in 2015 and followed by multiple 3-year plans updated annually during the subsequent years (2016-2018, 2018-2020, 2020-2022). These plans are developed by MOPIIC in coordination with other ministries, the international donor community, UN agencies, international and national NGOs, community-based organizations, society groups, charities, foundations, refugees, and Jordanian communities (ISWG, 2017; UNHCR, 2023b). Thus, while characterized by strong national leadership, they have a broad supportive foundation built on partnerships on various levels, including the local, sub-national, national, regional, and international (UNHCR, 2023b). Being part of the broader, regional 3RP, the JRP is the main refugee response framework on the national level, but aligns with the general aims of the 3RP, its two main pillars, refugees, and resilience, and combines the humanitarian and development approach (ISWG, 2017).

The JRP stands out for its inclusivity and responsibility approach which aims at including all vulnerable individuals, irrespective of their nationality, quickly adapting to changing circumstances, and at providing the most suitable solutions (IHD, n.d.; UNHCR, 2023b). Thus, Jordan, with the support of the international community, is working to mitigate the impact of the refugee crisis on the local population while ensuring that the response takes a local perspective, considers the specific context, and thereby ensures a more sustainable, effective, inclusive, and comprehensive response (Mencutek & Nashwan, 2023). Overall, the Jordanian government has three main objectives with the JRP: to claim national ownership of the refugee response, to combine refugee responses and development goals in one comprehensive plan, and to emphasize its budgetary needs to gain international support (Mencutek & Nashwan, 2023). By combining the humanitarian response to the refugee situation with the national development approach, it allows for greater cooperation,

responsibility sharing and better coordination between these interlinked sectors. This provides a more sustainable and needs-based response to the Syrian conflict's impacts on Jordan, its institutions as well as its society and refugees (UNHCR, 2023b). Moreover, it also resonates with an everyday approach that emphasizes the importance of local circumstances and the experiences of the affected population in order to achieve suitable, long-term solutions.

Hence, the JRP not only addresses short-term humanitarian needs, but aligns its response with Jordan's broader, long-term development objectives, thereby addressing underlying issues and vulnerabilities at various levels and working to improve Jordan's long-term service delivery and overall resilience to future crises (JNCW, 2017). With this approach, the JRP aligns not only with national priorities and strategies, but with a number of international processes, including the Global Compact on Refugees, as well as the Agenda 2030 and its Sustainable Development Goals. This is especially the case with the revised plan of 2020-2022 which narrowed down the twelve sectors previously covered by the JRP to only seven which all align with the SDGs and the GCR (GoJ, 2020). These seven sectors include Public Services, Education, Health, Economic Empowerment (including food security and livelihoods), Social protection and Justice (entailing child protection, SGBV, legal protection, PSEA, Civil Registry and Religious Courts), Shelter, and WASH (GoJ, 2020). The responses within each of these sectors are in accordance with the indicators and targets set out in the corresponding SDGs (UN, 2020). As already established in the context of the 3RP, for the purposes of this thesis it is advisable to discuss the objectives set out in the Jordan Response Plan in terms of the following three themes: Economic Empowerment, Social Protection and Access to Social Services, and Legal Empowerment.

The JRP aims to address economic empowerment through short and long-term measures, concrete interventions, and institutional changes, as well as on a national level and with international support. Thus, the JRP seeks to improve employment opportunities through interventions in the areas of self-employment (including home-based businesses), entrepreneurship (including MSMEs) and public-private partnerships. Moreover, the plan provides for increased support for the work of the Ministry of Labor and vocational and employment centers with the aim of increasing formal employment opportunities, as agreed in the Jordan Compact, and creating better working conditions, including labor rights and protection standards (GoJ, 2020). With these measures, the Jordanian government, and its partners also hope to increase refugees' self-reliance which is to be further enhanced through the establishment of a more comprehensive legal framework regarding employment rights and opportunities for refugees (GoJ, 2020). In addition, the JRP saw the development of the Livelihoods Working Group, which provides a space for information sharing, as well as discussion of

socioeconomic developments and changes in the policy framework (GoJ, 2020). Finally, the JRP is also supported by the ILO, which, among other things, supports the development of strategies to ensure decent work opportunities, improves access to employment and livelihoods, and seeks to strengthen institutional capacity and coordination (ILO, 2015b).

In regard to the social protection sector and access to social services, the government of Jordan aims to achieve better access to social protection services, as well as a higher quality thereof (GoJ, 2020). It wants to create an inclusive system and put a specific focus on the most vulnerable societal groups, such as refugees, to leave no one behind and achieve a decent life for all (GoJ, 2020). However, the government not only focuses on a stronger national social and social-protection system, but also on close cooperation with NGOs. These shall support national institutions and thereby contribute to an inclusive, high-quality system that guarantees education, health care and other social services for all as well as temporary social assistance for its citizens (GoJ, 2020).

In terms of legal empowerment, the JRP aims to ensure quality and timely access to the justice system for all and has the objective of strengthening the legal institutional capacity, including that of the Ministry of Justice, courts, the Supreme Judge Department and Civil Society Organizations working in the field of legal aid (GoJ, 2020). Besides hiring more personnel, including judges, the JRP plans to establish alternative mediation methods to lower the number of cases in court (GoJ, 2020). As legal aid services, such as counseling, alternative dispute resolution, legal assistance, and representation, are provided by both, state entities and civil society organizations, the JRP also envisions increased pro-bono provision of services, as well as increased support and resources for legal clinics and legal aid centers to deliver their services to Syrian refugees and vulnerable Jordanians (GoJ, 2020). Lastly, the JRP highlights community-level awareness campaigns to provide affected people with information about their rights, availability of (informal) legal services and the role of courts (GoJ, 2020). This reflects an everyday approach as it emphasizes the significance of diverse actors, challenging the supremacy of formal institutions and states. It also recognizes that vulnerable populations, including refugees, may have difficulty accessing institutional, formal legal systems and ensures that their legal needs are nonetheless addressed by providing a wider range of legal services.

Overall, the Jordan Response Plan for the Syrian Crisis is recognized as a success for national-led refugee responses (UNHCR, 2023b). Nevertheless, it has also been criticized for lacking measures to enhance the creation of new jobs, long-term employment, and economic growth (UN, 2020). It has been argued that a focus on these aspects would advance the economic empowerment of refugees and support the economic situation of the local population. Moreover, it would also lead to greater social

cohesion and a more inclusive society by bringing together refugees and Jordanians, decreasing inequalities between different societal groups, and increasing opportunities for all (UN, 2020).

5.2.5 Compatibility of International and National Law

Having provided an overview of the existing international and national laws, the following briefly outlines how the global framework is reflected in the Jordanian context and compares the compatibility of international and Jordanian frameworks.

As already mentioned, Jordan is not a signatory of the 1951 Refugee Convention or its 1967 Protocol. Neither does Jordan have a specific national legislation dedicated to asylum seekers and refugees, which has oftentimes been criticized as constituting a considerable gap in regard to refugees' situation in the country. Nevertheless, it has also become clear that Jordan is strongly influenced by international frameworks and closely cooperates with the UNHCR, ILO and other international organizations. As mentioned above, Jordan has signed a MoU with UNHCR which outlines the major principles of international protection, including the definition of a refugee and the principle of non-refoulement.

However, in recent years, the MoU has been criticized for being outdated and no longer representing current developments nor being able to provide adequate responses to recent refugee situations. Moreover, while Jordan is bound to the principle of non-refoulement both by the MoU and through international customary law, and has generally adhered to the principle, there have also been concerns about the detention of refugees and asylum seekers. Similar concerns have been raised in regard to Jordan's commitment to temporary protection and restrictions on refugees' movement and employment which negatively affect refugees' access to basic services.

Thus, despite numerous reforms in regard to refugees' economic participation, restrictions on work permits, their duration as well as the sectors in which refugees can be employed persist. Moreover, criticism has been uttered in light of the lack of consistent and reliable employment policies and its negative effects on the financial stability and self-reliance of refugees and their families as well as on their safety and security, especially in relation to potential exploitation and workplace discrimination. In regard to refugees' access to basic services, including education and healthcare, Jordan has made efforts to improve refugees' access. However, a lack of resources, particularly in light of increasingly high numbers of refugees have limited the guarantee of access to these services and have ultimately led to a more restrictive approach, particularly in regard to the financing of healthcare. Regarding education, it has further been criticized that schools are overcrowded and the right to education cannot be guaranteed. Similar issues persist for the living standards of refugees, especially in refugee camps,

which due to the high numbers of refugees and lack of resources, have been characterized by inadequate living conditions such as limited access to sanitation, shelter, and other basic necessities.

In light of Jordan's limited resources and its high numbers of refugees, the country has received a great amount of international support and financial aid and has cooperated with the international community as well as regional partners to cope with the refugee influx. However, Jordan has also used its position and importance in hosting refugees to shape the support and aid provided by the international community and has made sure its own interests are met. Thus, Jordan has ensured that not only refugees, but also its own population can benefit from international support and that the country itself gains some profit from hosting refugees. This is related to the decolonial framework outlined previously, and points to the persistence of certain colonial structures and complex power relations. In this sense, Jordan's negotiations with the international community on international support in exchange taking in refugees challenge these colonial structures and narratives about the Global South's dependence on the Global North.

Overall, it can be said that despite Jordan's lack of official national framework, the country aligns with the international framework, and, at least in theory, is committed to meeting refugees' rights. However, Jordan has at times, also implemented restrictive policies which limited refugees' rights and access to basic services, in particular healthcare and employment, and thereby acted against international obligations and agreements. This was mainly due to concerns about the country's own stability, economy, and social cohesion. Additionally, it has also been argued that accession to the 1951 Refugee Convention and its 1967 Protocol as well as the development of a national legal framework for refugees would be important to establish a clear legal environment and provide more certainty and guidance for both refugees and organizations operating in the field. This would also formalize Jordan's efforts, provide a basis for cooperation with other countries and international organizations, and facilitate international support in the refugee response.

5.3 Initiatives for Refugee Empowerment

In addition to the above-described frameworks, international and national actors, including UN agencies, foreign governments, and civil society organizations, have been implementing programs to enhance refugees' self-determination through economic empowerment, increased self-reliance and programs focused on particularly marginalized groups, including women and children. The following briefly discusses these initiatives, starting with those focused on economic empowerment.

As mentioned previously, in order to provide economic opportunities to refugees, the cash-for-work program was established in Jordan's refugee camps. The program provides short-term jobs aiding humanitarian organizations to fulfill their tasks on a circulating basis, thereby ensuring that all those interested get a chance to work in the scheme for at least some time every year (Dalal, 2015). While these opportunities provide some money to refugees, the jobs are not well remunerated and are nowhere near enough to cover the regular costs of a refugee led alone of an entire family and do not represent a very reliable, but rather a temporary income (Dalal, 2015).

Furthermore, in addition to its program to enhance access to employment opportunities, and as mentioned in the context of the JRP, the ILO supports the economic empowerment of refugees in Jordan. Thus, through its Regular Budget Supplementary Account, the ILO gains un-earmarked funding from development partners, which it has been using since 2017 to establish a comprehensive program to support Jordan's economic development and the objectives set out in the Jordan Compact (ILO, 2017). The program aims to address some of the key issues of the Jordanian market, including adherence to adequate employment standards and workers' protection, support for the private sector and (international) trade, as well as the creation of new jobs (ILO, 2017). In this context, the ILO has increased its efforts to provide both Syrian refugee and Jordanian construction workers with formal training which not only equips them with the necessary skills, but also an official training certificate which may improve their future employment opportunities (ILO, 2017).

Apart from these, the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development has also been active in the context of resilience building and economic empowerment. Since 2016 it has initiated various activities focused on the development of infrastructure, access to finance, inclusion, and gender. For this it provided a budget of 900 million euros through its Community Resilience package for Jordan, Türkiye, and Lebanon, which have all been highly affected by refugee influx (UNHCR, 2018d).

In Jordan, UNHCR, in cooperation with UNICEF and the World Food Program, has also been working on the economic empowerment of refugees, specifically on their inclusion in the national financial system through increased opportunities and a generally broader access to financial services (3RP, 2023). To this end, the three have worked closely with the Jordanian government, other development actors, private sector partners and the donor community, with the aim of empowering refugees and providing them with greater self-determination through their inclusion in the financial system and the management of their own finances (3RP, 2023).

On top of the engagement of international organizations, government-supported programs, such as the UK-backed police-training program conducted by the British company SIREN Associated, play

a vital role in the empowerment of refugees. This specific program, for example, saw the training of so-called community police officers to work in the Za'atari refugee camp and provided a low-key approach to engage with the concerns of refugees through cooperation with refugee civil society actors such as imams, aid agencies and group leaders (Watkins, 2018). While this program did not see the training of refugees themselves but rather of Jordanians, it nevertheless increased refugees' agency by providing additional contact persons and opportunities to raise their concerns and solve issues and disputes. Similar to the UK-backed program, the US embassy initiated a program to train police for the so-called Neighborhood Watch Program in Za'atari camp. However, in contrast to the prior project, the US-backed program recruited and trained 600 Syrian refugees to become police officers in their own neighborhood. Thereby it aimed both at providing additional employment as well as at increasing refugees' agency by allowing and enabling the refugee community to preserve their own security in the camp (Watkins, 2018). However, despite initial success, the program ultimately proved to be a failure, as it led, contrary to expectations, to the exploitation of power, corruption, and other issues, including vigilantism, social exclusion, and incoherence, as well as hostility towards the refugees involved in the program (Watkins, 2018).

In addition to these specific economic empowerment programs, several other organizations, and actors working in Jordanian refugee camps have initiated vocational training and empowerment programs for refugees. These include soft skill development adapted to the Jordanian context focused on skills such as communication, teamwork, and interview techniques, as well as life-skills centered around refugees' interpersonal abilities, decision-making and daily lives. These programs are seen as improving refugees' well-being and resilience, facilitating their job search, increasing their chances for job attainment, and enhancing their engagement in community life (Alnewashi, 2019). With these programs, organizations working in the field, acknowledge that hard skills alone tend to not be sufficient to succeed on the Jordanian job market, and that, for decent, long-term employment further knowledge of the Jordanian work culture and local circumstances is beneficial. Such programs thereby comply with an everyday approach that points to the importance of understanding the specific local circumstances to establish meaningful practices and participation.

Moreover, apart from economic empowerment, one of the main focuses in refugee camps has been the empowerment of particularly marginalized groups. Therefore, a number of programs concerned with the empowerment of women or gender-specific and socio-cultural norms, have been initiated. UN Women, in cooperation with INTERSOS, for example, established the "Women and Girls Oasis" in the Za'atari refugee camp in 2012 to strengthen the resilience and empowerment of women and girls (Jabbar & Zaza, 2015; Prieto, 2018). The Oasis was created as a safe space for women and girls

and provides the opportunity for community engagement as well as for personal and social development, with the goal to provide new hope and enhance refugee women's confidence and self-esteem (Jabbar & Zaza, 2015; Prieto, 2018). Thus, apart from peer-to-peer support for issues such as violence and abuse, the Oasis also provides remedial education opportunities for children and skill training for women in the economic sector, including entrepreneurship. Thereby, it enhances women's chances for obtaining a job, engage in the local society, and build a better, more sustainable future for themselves and their families (Alnewashi, 2019; Prieto, 2018).

Despite the success of some of these programs, and their support for refugee empowerment, oftentimes, it has been criticized that the outcome of such livelihood and agency-enhancing programs is rather limited in the long term. It has been pointed out that these programs tend to lack transparency and meaningful participatory processes as they are usually developed by (international) organizations in cooperation with donors, rather than by people on the ground, and refugees tend to only be involved once the programs have been developed already. This disregards the importance of adapting programs to the specific circumstances and experiences of the target groups and neglects their importance in developing successful, well-suited programs. Thus, such programs fail to adapt an everyday approach. This greatly limits the potential of the projects, as an involvement of those most affected from the outset, would allow for much better adapted, better informed, and more suitable programs. It would also enhance refugees' political and social agency and empower them through their active participation in the design, development, and implementation of such processes.

Moreover, concerns regarding the evaluation of these programs have been expressed, as oftentimes, evaluations are non-existent, not thorough, and consistent enough, or generally highly limited due to time, and budget restrictions (Schön et al., 2017). Many programs are solely evaluated once completed (and even then, may lack adequate and detailed assessment), allowing for little adjustment throughout the project, which in regard to their lengthiness with some spanning over multiple years, is highly problematic. Therefore, conducting proper evaluations and performance measurements would be of immense value to gain insights into the efficiency and effectiveness of the programs and to be able to adapt them for the future, increase their impact and suitability, and ensure that the best possible results are achieved (Schön et al., 2017). This is particularly relevant in the context of programs focused on the empowerment of refugees, as the results are less tangible and straightforward. Thus, often-times proper assessment and comparison of the situation prior and after the intervention is needed to gain a better understanding of the investments, services, and actions, and to understand whether any of them ultimately promoted refugee agency. While ensuring the quality and success of programs is important in any context, this is even more the case in contexts addressing

refugees and other marginalized and particularly vulnerable groups, to ensure that such programs benefit their addressee and alleviate their concerns rather than further aggravate their situation and position. Proper assessment and thorough evaluation reports, would furthermore, help other agents who may plan similar programs, by providing lessons learned and insights into potential weaknesses and complications. This would prevent repeating the same planning and implementation mistakes made by previous actors and ensure a more appropriate implementation of empowerment programs leading to better results.

6 Framework Implementation in Jordan

Having provided an overview of the international and national laws and frameworks and their compatibility, it remains to analyze their implementation on the ground. The following section therefore explores how the law might strengthen or hinder refugees' efforts to become active agents, and what steps could be taken to achieve and comply with the objectives of international refugee frameworks. Moreover, the role of UNHCR in relation to refugee agency, and refugees' participation and activism, is discussed. The chapter also addresses the dichotomy between official UNHCR and national policies, and their implementation on the ground. Finally, some of the political and ethical implications of these findings for the governance of refugees are outlined.

6.1 How might the law hinder or strengthen refugees' efforts to become active agents?

In recent years, there has been frequent criticism that the laws and systems dealing with refugees are outdated and do not keep pace with changing circumstances and it has been argued that they no longer meet the needs of refugees, forced migrants, IDPs or host countries (Mayer, 2016). It has also been criticized that these frameworks are ill-equipped to navigate the evolving landscape, notably in light of prolonged displacement durations and the prevalence of protracted refugee situations in recent years. This is due to the prevalent assumption within many legal frameworks and approaches that refugee crises are short-term occurrences which can quickly be resolved through crisis interventions and humanitarian assistance. Contrary to this assumption, empirical evidence refutes the effectiveness of widely endorsed laws and recommended policies in adequately meeting the diverse needs of refugees in protracted situations and protecting their rights (Dogon, 2021). The prevailing rationale that deems it justifiable to allow the temporary curtailment of certain rights during short-term crises to prioritize security, stability, and immediate needs of those affected becomes problematic when applied to protracted refugee scenarios as it results in prolonged deprivation of rights for refugees and contributes to their disempowerment. The widespread concern that current international frameworks are outdated and inapplicable to a substantial proportion of contemporary refugee situations is justified, as the legal conditions ultimately confer rights on refugees and form the basis for the exercise of agency (Oskay, 2016).

Another issue identified with many existing refugee frameworks is their vague language and lack of concrete implementation measures. On the one hand, this leads to different interpretations of such frameworks and different transpositions in national regulations and therefore to different outcomes in terms of access to education, economic opportunities, political rights, and health services. On the

other hand, the lack of implementation measures may mean that rights and standards set out in refugee frameworks are not put into practice, and refugees are consequently unable to benefit from them (Pasha, 2021b). This issue is exacerbated when the rights and norms under consideration are inherently universal, encompassing fundamental freedoms, agency, and the right to self-determination. These rights should ideally be applicable to all individuals irrespective of their citizenship status. However, a prevalent perspective persists in associating such entitlements with effective citizenship within a nation-state, thereby introducing a discord between the universal nature of these rights and their allocation based on citizenship status as commonly understood. These prevailing problems in relation to the timeliness of international refugee regulations, as well as their ambiguous wording and lack of comprehensive implementation, are particularly worrying in the context of countries such as Jordan, without national legislation dealing specifically with refugees and asylum seekers, where refugees are forced to rely on international obligations to obtain redress and protection.

Moreover, challenges persist in translating theoretical principles into practical applications, both within national and international frameworks. Thus, despite theoretical support for enhancing the resilience and empowerment of displaced populations, practical implementation often falls short. Instead, refugee governance tends to center around the establishment of a humanitarian government prioritizing top-down approaches that emphasize law and order, and basic needs, but neglect the active engagement of the affected population (Pasha, 2020). This inclination likely arises from fears that politically active refugees could bear potential risks, including riots, which could harm both the host state and the humanitarian government itself (Omata, 2017; Oskay, 2016). As an authoritative approach provides greater security and facilitates access to essential services and civic infrastructure, it is argued that such an approach proves more effective within the context of refugee camps. Consequently, it is justified even though it diminishes the decision-making power of refugee populations, limits their mobility, and restricts their rights (Pasha, 2020).

Nevertheless, there have also been efforts to include refugees in more concrete terms and emphasize the importance of their participation in international frameworks. Thus, it is widely agreed that refugees are capable actors who should be involved in political and social developments throughout their displacement. This has, as previously mentioned, also led to an increase in participatory approaches, in particular by the UN and its agencies. This can for example be observed in UNHCR's Strategic Directions which include a focus on the inclusion and empowerment of refugees and an aim to achieve greater self-reliance. However, as has been discussed before, such a participatory approach remains largely absent in other frameworks, such as the Sustainable Development Goals, where

refugees are only referred to on a sidenote. Moreover, international and national frameworks have limited effect as they are often not implemented coherently on the ground, and hence, dichotomies with the realities in refugee camps persist. Thus, while it has been acknowledged that there is an increasing focus on enhancing the inclusion and agency of refugees in international frameworks, it has also been criticized that such frameworks often fail to develop realistic policies and approaches that would allow refugees to become independent and active decision-makers (Dalal, 2015). This leads to divergence between the target and actual state and is further aggravated by national policies which tend to impose restricting rules and regulations on refugees, contain them in camps and increase their dependency on international aid. This can also be observed in Za'atari camp, which despite international frameworks calling for the inclusion of refugees, was constructed at a distance from the nearest town and created as a separate entity, with no or little options for engagement with the local society. Thereby, putting the interests of the Jordanian government above the needs, rights, and welfare of displaced people, who end up being warehoused in marginal camps with few official means to exercise agency and influence their circumstances (Pasha, 2020).

To address both national interests and the needs and rights of refugee communities, there is a growing discourse advocating for a shift in the approach to displacement. Rather than exclusively relying on a humanitarian aid-focused strategy, proponents argue for the adoption of a developmental approach (Dalal, 2015; Wardeh & Marquez, 2023). This perspective emphasizes that the current practice of employing separate approaches for local development and displaced communities has led to the creation of distinct systems and dual structures, resulting in inefficiency and a waste of resources. Furthermore, it is argued that dealing with refugee situations independently from local development, particularly in protracted refugee scenarios, is ineffective as the improvement of refugees' socio-economic conditions beyond meeting basic needs is intricately connected to the socio-economic situation within the host state. Consequently, achieving meaningful progress is contingent on the alignment of refugee interventions with the prevailing local circumstances. Therefore, it is claimed that a developmental focus adapted to local circumstances and dynamics would be a more effective approach. Such an approach would be able to address national concerns and facilitate adaptive measures as well as enable the integration of refugees into national development programs, the local workforce and society. This would also lead to more inclusivity and better integration, ease the burden on local economies and aid in overcoming prejudices such as the image of refugees as thieves of social welfare (Dalal, 2015; Wardeh & Marquez, 2023).

To be able to succeed with such an approach that comprises the incorporation of large numbers of refugees into local systems, the guarantee of basic rights and the fulfillment of basic needs, more

support is needed. Thus, a developmental approach also argues for more intersectoral collaboration and partnership between all relevant actors, including the displaced and local communities themselves, as well as governmental and non-governmental institutions, the international community, and the private sector (Wardeh & Marquez, 2023). In this context, it is also argued that greater international support to states most affected by displacement, and oversight of refugee situations could be beneficial to guarantee that international standards are consistently complied with and both the host communities as well as refugees get the support they need. Moreover, it is agreed that host countries should increase their efforts in promoting inclusive policies that support the development and agency of refugees, their participation in community decision-making processes as well as their integration into the labor market through the promotion of decent work and equal wages (Wardeh & Marquez, 2023). Such a multifaceted approach would not only facilitate refugees' integration into local society and enhance self-reliance but would also bring other significant benefits. These would include the enrichment of the local workforce with diverse perspectives and human resources, as well as the promotion of a more dynamic and resilient community.

6.2 What is the role of UNHCR: How does it hinder or support refugees' agency, involvement, and activism?

In regard to refugee empowerment, UNHCR also plays a key role, and the following briefly analyzes the role of the organization and how it may hinder or support refugees' agency, their involvement and activism.

UNHCR provides crucial protection to refugees through the provision of shelter, healthcare, and education, and thereby ensures that their basic needs are met. However, by providing humanitarian aid and continuously hosting refugees in confined spaces such as refugee camps, UNHCR also contributes to refugees' dependence on the organization and other aid providers. UNHCR is also a strong advocate for the adherence to refugee and human rights and international refugee laws. Moreover, the organization has, as mentioned before, also aimed at adopting a participatory approach and has emphasized its commitment to greater inclusion and empowerment of displaced communities. Simultaneously however, the politicization of displaced communities residing in refugee camps stands in tension with UNHCR's humanitarian approach (Turner, 2015). While still attempting to accommodate the aspirations of refugees to actively participate, UNHCR has therefore also set in place guidelines and constraints on refugees' participation and exercise of agency (Oskay, 2016; Turner, 2015). Hence, although permitting certain forms of participation, UNHCR restricts

such involvement to defined limits and conditions, likely as a precautionary measure to prevent these activities from posing a threat to its own authority or to adhere to agreements with the host state.

This is closely tied to the operational dynamics of the UNHCR, its bureaucratic nature and complex administrative processes. Despite playing a crucial role in the governance and administration of refugees, the UNHCR is fundamentally dependent on the support and funding of the international community, as well as the cooperation of host states. This dependence confines the UNHCR within the interests of host states and the international community and leaves it powerless on its own. Therefore, it has been criticized that, in practice, the opportunities for meaningful participation and exercise of agency in refugee camps, are tightly regulated and constrained by UNHCR and other actors. Thus, even seemingly ordinary expressions of agency may be viewed as potential threats to UNHCR, refugee camps' functioning or the stability of the host state, leading to attempts to prevent them (Turner, 2010).

As becomes clear, UNHCR plays a pivotal role in the design of international frameworks and regulations concerning refugees, as well as in their implementation through its involvement in the management of refugee camps. Thereby, the organization contributes to the well-being of displaced people as well as the assurance of their rights. Simultaneously however, UNHCR is also faced with various constraints which in practice limit its influence on advocating for refugees' agency, involvement, and activism, even if it wanted to. For this reason, UNHCR is constantly engaged in balancing its obligations to refugees by providing them with the necessary support and empowerment, its commitment to the host states and the international community, and its own concerns about its authority and funding.

6.3 The Situation in Za'atari Refugee Camp

The following provides a deeper understanding of the specific context of Za'atari refugee camp and the possibilities and restrictions for refugee agency. It gives a detailed outline of the camp's governance structures and legalities as well as the living situation of its inhabitants. The latter is divided into four main sections: fulfillment of basic needs, economic situation, education, and work. Each of which comprises multiple sub-sections. The section concludes with a summary of the key issues of the camp and the needs of its inhabitants.

Za'atari refugee camp is jointly managed by the Jordanian government, specifically the SRAD, and the UNHCR (Mindset, 2022). In this context, the UNHCR takes the lead role in camp coordination at both the strategic and inter-camp level, and is responsible for the fields Protection, Health, Shelter

and Site Planning, Community Mobilization, Basic Needs, and Livelihoods at the sector level, while the SRAD, which is part of the Jordanian Public Security Directorate (PSD), is mainly responsible for the camp's security (Mindset, 2022; Watkins, 2018). Moreover, refugee street leaders have been appointed and integrated into the camp's administrative structures, serving as contact points for (international) aid organizations and Jordanian authorities (Pasha, 2020; Watkins, 2018).

Given the structure of the camp, its governance and administration, without one single legal entity, Za'atari camp can legally be described as *sui generis* legal entity with a complex set of customary law mechanisms, influenced by Syrian customary law as well as international norms, that coexist with and are essentially independent of the Jordanian judiciary (Riach & James, 2016). This complex legal context, with overlapping legal and semi-legal provisions, including camp regulations, religious and traditional observances, informal codes of conduct and gender roles, alongside Syrian, Jordanian, and international law, makes a consistent understanding of the rights and entitlements of those living in the camp nearly impossible (Purkey, 2013; Riach & James, 2016). In light of these legal uncertainties, affecting not only their status but also their rights, and the power exercised on them, which further limits their ability to question decisions and live a self-determined life, it is astonishing that refugee camp inhabitants still manage to establish some sort of organization and social life in the camp (Agier, 2011).

To further understand these possibilities for a self-determined life and the exercise of agency, it is necessary to better understand the concrete situation of Syrian refugees in Jordan, and in particular in Za'atari refugee camp. The following therefore provides an overview of the fulfillment of refugees' basic needs, such as nutrition, WASH, and health, as well as their economic situation, including subsections on poverty, education, and work.

Once arriving in Za'atari, refugees are given basic food rations, including rice, lentils, bulgur, and oil, as well as basic non-food items such as mattresses and sheets (Dalal, 2015). Moreover, within Za'atari refugee camp, large-scale basic needs assistance programs are in place, and a number of recreational and informal educational activities are being offered to support refugees, help them cope with trauma, gain new and useful skills, and spend their time in a productive manner (Pasha, 2020). However, as mentioned before, Syrian refugees in Jordan often face hardships not only due to their flight experience and its physical and mental consequences, but also due to local circumstances. These are often characterized by human rights violations, uncertainty about their status and future, and an increasing state of despair and loss of dignity caused by prolonged displacement and an unsustainable status quo in the refugee camps (Mayer, 2016). Hence, one should keep in mind the enormous impact

Jordan's national and local policies have on refugees, their freedom of movement, residency, employment, housing, education, and healthcare (Yahya et al., 2018).

Regarding the fulfilment of basic needs, it should be noted that food insecurity is on the rise amongst Syrian refugees living in Jordanian refugee camps (Mindset, 2022). While the level had decreased in the years after 2014, it increased from five per cent in 2019 to 19 per cent in 2020 (UN, 2020). In Za'atari refugee camp in particular, 16 per cent of respondents stated being affected by undernourishment which is already visible in elevated levels of anemia, peculiarly amongst women and children, which is caused by inadequate nutrition (Wardeh & Marquez, 2023). Given the negative effects of hunger on development and growth, the lack of nutrition also affects other sectors related to refugees' ability to exercise agency including education, protection, and health. Furthermore, it can be observed that challenges faced by the wider Jordanian population are also prevalent in refugee camps, including for example the reliance on diminishing groundwater resources, which will, eventually, impact the water supply and thereby WASH services within the camps (UN, 2020). However, 87 per cent of respondents in Za'atari refugee camp currently have access to adequate and appropriate sanitation facilities, and generally, Za'atari is equipped with safe water and sanitation networks that provide access to safe and affordable drinking water and adequate wastewater treatment (Wardeh & Marquez, 2023).

In terms of refugees' health and their access to relevant services, chronic diseases and disabilities are prevalent in Za'atari camp but usually, primary, and secondary health services are available to refugees in Za'atari camp as well as in nearby hospitals (Wardeh & Marquez, 2023). Nevertheless, in addition to elevated levels of discrimination and inhumane behaviors by health care providers, a substantial proportion of refugees in Za'atari face financing challenges related to health issues, limiting their access to needed treatment and medication, and only a small share has access to all essential health services (Wardeh & Marquez, 2023). This relates to the often desolate economic situation of Syrian refugees in Jordan, who not only face higher living costs than in Syria, but also fewer employment opportunities (Yahya et al., 2018). As a result, most families living in Jordanian refugee camps have limited access to secure and stable livelihoods and about half of the camps' inhabitants live beneath the international poverty line (Mindset, 2022; Wardeh & Marquez, 2023). As a result, it is quite common to incur debts in Za'atari refugee camp to cover basic needs such as food and medical care, but also to cover additional expenses such as those related to weddings, funerals, or the purchase of furniture (Mindset, 2022). This is necessary even though the UNHCR and WFP regularly provide cash assistance of around USD 28 per person per month for food expenses and supplementary cash assistance every three months for cooking gas, baby diapers and hygiene

items for women, and further highlights the impact of the persistent underfunding of humanitarian assistance (Mindset, 2022).

The prevalence of poverty among refugees not only leads to the accumulation of debt but also to other negative coping strategies, such as spending savings, accepting informal or high-risk work, reducing expenditure on health and education, early marriage, drug and human trafficking, commercial sexual exploitation, and child labor (Mayer, 2016; Mindset, 2022; Wardeh & Marquez, 2023). These coping mechanisms have negative short- and long-term effects on the lives of refugees as they increase their vulnerability to harm, lead to the loss of education and limit the refugees' long-term possibilities in life (Mayer, 2016). Moreover, it should be pointed out that they negatively affect the achievement of the international Sustainable Development Goals, in particular SDGs two, zero hunger, three, good health and well-being, four, quality education, and five, gender equality (Wardeh & Marquez, 2023).

Reflecting this, the school dropout rate among refugee camp residents is quite high, not only due to the excessive cost, but also because of bullying, discrimination, violence at school and the obligation to complete household chores (Yahya et al., 2018). While enrollment rates are high for children in early childhood development and pre-primary education, enrollment rates tend to decline with growing age (Wardeh & Marquez, 2023). Thus, while a majority of the 6- to 15-year-olds in Za'atari refugee camp attend school, only 60 per cent of the 16- to 17-year-olds and less than 50 per cent of the 18-year-olds are enrolled in school (Mindset, 2022). This decline is partly due to the fact that youth aged 16 to 18 are not required to attend school. Yet, the enrollment rates of refugees of that age are significantly lower than that of Jordanians, presumably due to the need to support their families economically and a lack of motivation given the poor prospects for finding a decent job (Mindset, 2022; Yahya et al., 2018).

Overall, though, it is important to note that the Jordanian government quickly adapted to the arrival of Syrian refugees and the availability of education in Za'atari refugee camp has increased significantly since it was first built, with the camp now offering both primary and secondary education. However, besides high drop-out rates, Za'atari also struggles with the quality of education provided at its schools due to limited human resources, poor infrastructure and the high number of refugees and school attendees (3RP, 2023). Generally, classes are large and comprise on average fifty students, and still, schools have to conduct double shifts in order to provide education for all children, which negatively affects the number of school hours provided to each student (Schön et al., 2017). In addition, during the pandemic, and particularly during times of distant-learning, access to education was limited for refugees as they encountered issues such as the lack of internet connection, adequate devices, and necessary support services (3RP, 2023). This points out a larger issue: while education

is seen as important, both for the future opportunities of refugees, including for increased self-reliance, as well as for means of protection for children, education receives less than two per cent of humanitarian financing, leaving current needs unmet (Grossman & Post, 2019; UN, 2020).

Another aspect that has a strong impact on refugees' lives is the accessibility of work. Although the majority of refugees escaping conflict do not come to other countries for work related reasons, it is virtually inevitable that paid work becomes imperative both for their economic livelihood but also for their psychosocial welfare, peculiarly in protracted situations (ILO, 2015a). Hence, taking up paid work not only serves as financial resource, reduces debts, and ensures that refugees can meet their basic needs, but also strengthens their self-reliance. Thereby, work provides refugees relief, earns them respect, and restores their dignity and self-confidence (Mencutek & Nashwan, 2021). In addition, participation in the host country's labor force enables social contact with the local population and can contribute to the integration of refugees (Mencutek & Nashwan, 2021).

However, while many Syrian refugees in Jordan are determined to work, they are often faced with various obstacles, including a lack of credible and timely information as well as numerous limitations set in place by the Jordanian government (Gordon, 2017). These include complex restrictions for non-Jordanians which are limited to work within five economic sectors: agriculture, construction, food and beverage services, manufacturing as well as wholesale and retail trade (IRC, 2019). This leads to various issues, as for one, those sectors tend to be male dominated, posing an issue to many refugee women who are faced with cultural and gender-based barriers. Second, these restrictions limit the available job opportunities for all refugees, as they reduce the number of opportunities matching refugees' skills and preferences, especially since many of them have, compared to Jordanians, a rather low level of education. This increases the competition for low skilled work in Jordan, particularly between refugees and economic migrants from Egypt and South Asia (IRC, 2019; Mencutek & Nashwan, 2021; Schön et al., 2017). In addition to sectoral limitations, the process of obtaining a work permit is strenuous, lengthy, and costly, requires the proof of proper documents, the support of an employer (who needs to go through a defined process and prove that the position requires expertise unavailable on the Jordanian market) and once completed, has to be repeated in one year's time due to work permits' short validity (Gordon, 2017; IRC, 2019; Mindset, 2022).

In Za'atari camp, about 50 per cent of families reported not having a working member (Mindset, 2022). Thus, unemployment rates are high and disproportionately affecting women and youth (3RP, 2023). The reasons for unemployment are diverse, and besides difficulties of finding work, include family and household duties, disabilities, and medical conditions, studying and being enrolled in school, as well as lacking the desire to work or being retired (Mindset, 2022). Women in particular

oftentimes leave their employment for family-related reasons such as child-care responsibilities or pregnancy. This is further exacerbated by a lack of social-familial support in the refugee camp, a lack of nursery facilities, and familial and social pressures from other Syrian refugees, as well as issues related to a lack of adequate infrastructure such as good transportation, leading to too long commutes and making it impossible for them to work in certain jobs due to (child-) care responsibilities (Betts et al., 2017; Mencutek & Nashwan, 2021). In addition, many refugees have stated that long working hours, and poor salaries, as well as the general work environment, often defined by negative attitudes of managers and co-workers led to their resignation (Mencutek & Nashwan, 2021).

Of those refugees employed within the camp, about 8 per cent are involved in cash-for-work activities by UN agencies and NGOs which offer 74 per cent semi-skilled work, earning 1 Jordanian Dinar per hour, and 26 per cent skilled work, earning 1.5 Jordanian Dinar per hour (Schön et al., 2017). Moreover, about 1.5 to 3 per cent of the shops within Za'atari camp are refugee-owned and provide the owners' livelihood (Schön et al., 2017). Of those working outside the camp in one of the five sectors permitted by the government, many in agriculture, about 25 per cent have reported being paid less than minimum wage (Mindset, 2022). In addition, refugees residing in Za'atari and working outside the camp, have stated further issues, including hazardous work environments such as work in extreme temperatures, exposure to dust and fumes, as well as exposure to loud noise or vibration (Mindset, 2022). Furthermore, some reported missing contracts (7%), delays in salary payment (6%), lack of payment (7%) and repeated insults at the workplace (3%) (Mindset, 2022). In general, Syrian workers are systematically paid less and expected to work harder, longer, and faster than Jordanian or Egyptian workers in the same workplace and in addition, are often faced with physical abuse or sexual harassment (Burlin, 2019; Gordon, 2017; ILO, 2015b). Overall, many job opportunities for Syrians are temporary, precarious, and inconsistent, and competition for decent work is high and has increased with the COVID-19 pandemic (Mindset, 2022; UNHCR, 2021). The pandemic has also led to an increase in informal work which is often defined by even more exploitative working conditions, protection concerns, minimal wages, long working hours, and a lack of legal ways to seek justice (Grossman & Post, 2019; Mencutek & Nashwan, 2021; Wardeh & Marquez, 2023).

As becomes clear, whether Syrian refugees work in the formal or informal sector, they are faced with serious concerns and oftentimes violations of their human rights. It has been argued that the working situation of refugees, including exploitation and abuse, is closely related to their lack of legal clarity, including uncertainty about their economic, civil, and political rights, and the fact that any refugee, whether involved in regular or irregular work, is in constant threat of arrest, detention, and deportation which leaves refugees with little bargaining power (Burlin, 2019; Gordon, 2017; Watkins, 2018).

Thus, the lack of legal and political agency of refugees due to their unclear legal status and the unwillingness of Jordan to guarantee them any rights or protection, leads to their economic exploitation and marginalization (Burlin, 2019). These concerns occur in addition to constraints limiting their employment opportunities in the first place such as complicated political conditions, a lack of clear and consistent information on employment opportunities, movement restrictions, cost of transportation as well as time and cost of administrative procedures and discrimination during the job-searching process (Gordon, 2017; Wardeh & Marquez, 2023).

To conclude this section, which focused extensively on Jordan's refugee policy as well as the Za'atari refugee camp and its inhabitants, it remains to point out that overall, the refugee situation in Za'atari is rather unsustainable and not beneficial for the self-determination nor the agency of its inhabitants. Jordan's policy of non-integration paired with the serious shortfall of humanitarian funding and development assistance has led to various negative consequences for Syrian refugees. These not only affect the fulfillment of refugees' basic needs, but also their recognition as humans (Mayer, 2016). This points out a dominant issue with protracted refugee crises as many of the systems and measures in place are meant for short-term relief and not adapted to long-term situations, such as that of Syrian refugees in Jordan. The current Jordanian refugee policy and international assistance have led to serious restrictions for Syrian refugees and the fulfillment of their economic needs. This becomes clear when looking at the unemployment rates, the lack of access to livelihood and the deepening poverty among them, which also increases their vulnerability and decreases their ability for the exercise of agency (Mayer, 2016). To keep in mind in this context are the worsening effects the Covid-19 pandemic and the shift of focus to other crises in the world have had on the situation of refugees in Jordan. In recent years, and notably with the lockdown, many families have not only lost their source of income but have experienced serious implications on their mental health and psychosocial status (IHD, n.d.). Moreover, the lockdown and the general lengthiness of refugees' stay in the Za'atari camp and the related uncertainty, increase the risk of domestic and communal violence, including sexual harassment and abuse, as well as tensions between host and refugee communities, especially with increasing pressures on service provision, competition for (low skill) jobs and deteriorating economic conditions (Mayer, 2016; Yahya et al., 2018).

The situation in Jordan thereby points out the need for adaptation once refugee situations become protracted. While at the outbreak of a crisis, immediate humanitarian relief and assistance are often the most needed, over time, refugees' needs change. Despite Jordan having adapted to some extent, it becomes clear, that this has not been done in a sufficient manner and many refugees continue to

feel as in a state of waiting (Agier, 2011). Thus, even though refugees' lives continue, they are in a way

“organized as a function of waiting, and this at every level: waiting for food, waiting for news of one's family [...], waiting for a possible change in the political situation [...].” (Agier, 2011, p. 77)

This wastes human potential and has lasting impacts on the lives of refugees and their well-being. More adapted measures would be needed to positively affect the lives of refugees in Jordan and facilitate the process towards more self-reliance (Schön et al., 2017). A basic step in this regard would be the provision of a reliable legal status, better support in the employment process as well as special attention to the most vulnerable when it comes to education, health, and financial concerns. This would also ensure meeting the UN-stated goal of leaving no one behind (Schön et al., 2017). In addition, a focus during (protracted) refugee crises should be the continued fulfillment of basic human rights such as the right of free movement and the right to work. Moreover, there is a need for continued effort to ensure refugees are aware of and know their legal rights and have access to legal services and information centers which can support them with any legal concerns but also ensure that they are met with humanity (Schön et al., 2017).

Hence, a change of the nature of humanitarian assistance and the related interventions is needed, if the long-documented request for refugee self-reliance, self-determination and refugee agency is to be taken seriously and achieved (Schön et al., 2017). For this, structural adaptations need to be made, and all stakeholders, including Jordan as the host state, refugees, local communities, as well as international donors, should be included in the process of finding more sustainable and beneficial ways to support refugees (and host communities) in their protracted situation and ensure their needs and rights are being met consistently (Mencutek & Nashwan, 2021). Thus, to overcome the structural lack of legal, economic, and political agency, the current neoliberal policy approach adopted by host countries and the international community does not appear to be expedient. Therefore, calls for a rights-based and well-being approach have been voiced to improve refugees' situations and increase their exercise of agency (Burlin, 2019; Mencutek & Nashwan, 2021).

6.4 What are the dichotomies between official UNHCR and national guidelines, and their implementation on the ground?

The international community, and in particular international organizations like UNHCR, have put an emphasis on “the fullest participation of refugees in decisions that affect their lives” (UNHCR, 2004,

p. 7), to enhance their accountability and increase refugees' self-determination (Omata, 2017). In the past years, numerous frameworks envisioning a participatory approach and active engagement of displaced communities, not only in their everyday lives, but also in larger processes such as peacebuilding and reconciliation, have emerged. However, as has become clear, the situation in practice often greatly differs from the goals stated in frameworks, and the terms "participation" and "engagement" remain vague and lead to varying outcomes. Therefore, the following looks at the concrete dichotomies between the official international and national guidelines and their implementation on the ground.

An issue that has been identified as contributing to the dichotomies between theoretical frameworks and the actual situation is the absence of an effective protection system. The strategies employed to address displacement, such as resettlement, integration, and repatriation, are intricately tied to the framework of the state system. However, this approach proves insufficient in many temporary situations, as well as in prolonged stays in refugee camps. Countries of first asylum often grant admission to refugees under temporary protection measures, resulting in refugees' ongoing restricted access to fundamental rights (Bradley et al., 2019). Notably, this limitation is evident in the realm of political and civil rights and participation which hinge on citizenship status rather than a universally acknowledged entitlement solely rooted in human identity (Bradley, 2014). Given that refugees possess either temporarily or virtually no citizenship, these rights seem to be rarely realized. Additionally, given the interdependencies of different forms of agency and rights, the absence of a protective system also greatly affects economic rights and participation, detrimentally impacts the refugees' autonomy, and counteracts empowerment measures. Despite the implementation of empowerment measures that could benefit refugees in general, such as the creation of employment opportunities granted through the Jordan Compact, their intended positive effects are limited by the absence of a protective system. This absence increases refugees' vulnerability and can lead to exploitation, which is particularly evident in employment situations, where refugees may be forced to accept unfavorable conditions due to a lack of legal avenues and possibilities to raise their concerns (Burlin, 2019).

An additional issue in relation to the dichotomies within the refugee regime is that, despite the change of language in official documents and widespread acknowledgement of the importance of refugee engagement, humanitarian workers on the ground seem to uphold a dual perspective of refugees as either victims to be saved or threats to be condemned (Olivius, 2017; Oskay, 2016). This denies the manifoldness of refugee identities, reduces refugees to prevailing stereotypes and prejudices, and dehumanizes refugees by denying them their political, economic, and social agency. Thus, refugee

participation remains scant, not only in processes and decisions regarding their everyday lives in the camps, but also in larger frameworks such as peace negotiations or peacebuilding efforts (Oskay, 2016). This is particularly concerning, considering that feedback mechanisms, through which refugees have consistently expressed their concerns and perspectives, have been largely disregarded. This neglect is evident not only in the formulation, execution, and evaluation of programs, but also in addressing the specific on-the-ground circumstances (Metcalf-Hough et al., 2019). This points to another dichotomy persistent in the governance of refugees. On the one hand, the international community and others in charge emphasize their eagerness to receive feedback, as well as encourage refugee participation, but on the other hand, once refugees follow suit, they are ignored, silenced, and repressed.

As previously indicated, this concern extends beyond the realm of feedback processes, and constitutes a fundamental challenge that gives rise to enduring dichotomies. Despite the pervasive advocacy for participatory methods and their perceived advantages for both displaced communities and host countries, various actors continue to circumscribe participation within predetermined parameters. Authorities frequently respond to autonomous mobilization efforts by refugees outside of approved participatory initiatives in which refugees demand their rights or advocate for their interests. Such reactions are characterized not only by indifference and neglect towards the demands, but also by skepticism, hostility, and repression, interpreting such forms of activism as potential threats and sources of disruption (Olivius, 2017). Consequently, despite ostensibly endorsing refugees' agency, the prevailing expectation is that such agency should manifest itself in apolitical and harmless forms (Omata, 2017). Such de-politization leads to the further silencing of refugees and relates to the dominant perception of refugees as apolitical, voiceless victims. Thereby it contradicts contemporary policies, as well as scholarship that focuses on the empowerment and ability of refugees to actively contribute to their environment and circumstances, and further enhances inherent contradictions within the humanitarian regime.

Likewise, refugee camps, exemplified by Za'atari, operate as dual entities – serving both as mechanisms for exclusion and spatial segregation, as well as facilitators of care (Pasha, 2021a). Despite their initial purpose to ensure enhanced and accessible services, along with the fulfillment of basic needs for refugees, camps paradoxically constrain refugees and impede the realization of their imperative for substantive participation. Encampment policies markedly curtail refugees' entitlement to freedom of movement, hinder their prospects of securing gainful employment, and render their engagement in formal political structures and processes nearly unattainable. Thereby, refugee camps lead to the violation of a number of rights and norms contained in the 1951 UN Convention Relating

to the Status of Refugees and its 1967 Protocol, including the freedom of movement and the right to seek wage-earning employment, as well as numerous international norms entailed in the SGDs and other international commitments, such as UNHCR's commitment to ensure the fullest participation of refugees in decisions that affect their lives (UNHCR, 2004).

Overall, it can be stated, that one of the key issues regarding the guarantee of refugee agency through the refugee regime, and the avoidance of dichotomies between legal frameworks and the actual situation, is the continued securitization of refugees. Securitization not only frames refugees as potential threats to the state system, the host country, social cohesion, and economic development, but also as causing riots and upheaval. Moreover, securitization characterizes refugees as a threat due to their underdevelopment and accuses them of being prone to join extremist groups. Through securitization, it becomes justified to confine refugees in camps, separate them from local societies, and (temporarily) limit their rights to the minimum, in order to avoid danger. The way securitization portrays refugees is generally untrue and the measures unjustified. They are built on ideas of othering which allows actors to strengthen their own position and the cohesion within their own nation or group by creating the "other", in this case the refugee, which poses a threat to one's own group. As a result, such methods gain the support of the wider society and reduce the scrutiny of debatable practices and measures to deal with refugee situations. Moreover, they create acceptance within the international community, especially the Global North, which, like countries of first asylum, is concerned with the maintenance of the state system and social order. Therefore, the Global North accepts and also adopts these discourses even if they limit refugees' rights, violate international frameworks and lead to refugees being warehoused in inhumane conditions for years. It hopes to thereby retain refugees in the Global South and keep the Global North unscathed and spared from potential dangers posed by refugees.

6.5 Refugee Agency and Political Mobilization

Given the circumstances of refugees in Jordan, including the state of basic rights, refugees' living conditions and the level of self-determination officially granted, the following gives a closer look to the agency of refugees, and the ways refugees manage to surpass restrictions and obstacles to mobilize, exercise agency, and take an active role in influencing their current and future situation, including their political mobilization, to not only address their everyday concerns but also affect larger processes (research questions 1 & 5). This is closely related to the everyday approach outlined previously, which emphasizes the significance of everyday actions and practices that challenge dominant power structures and norms (Guillaume & Huysmans, 2019).

Migration, and refugee movements in particular, raise a number of questions that challenge the traditional understanding of politics, including citizenship, and the autonomy and rights associated with it. Migration not only contests the concepts of in- and exclusion to political communities, and questions who may be considered a political subject, but also the idea of political activity and what may or may not be considered as such, and who gets the power to make decisions, to influence society and perform changes in the system (Nyers, 2015). This relates to the everyday approach and the significance of seemingly mundane activities which can, however, nevertheless challenge dominant narratives and bring attention to the political agency of marginalized groups. Nevertheless, the issue hereby is that political rights are associated with citizenship, and are therefore, only granted to citizens. Citizenship, in this sense, is a particular form of politics and governance that not only grants certain rights and defines responsibilities, but also affects the attention given to certain concerns depending on who voiced them, and hence, influences the representation of people (Papadopoulos & Tsianos, 2013). By this, citizenship furthermore performs an inclusion and exclusion process. While it grants certain rights, such as making claims, raising concerns, and gaining representation to certain individuals, thereby creating a group of successful subjects, included in citizenship, it excludes others, who not only lose the right of representation, but consequently also to some extent control over their lives, and thus become considered unsuccessful subjects (Nyers, 2015).

This, however, raises the question of what happens to refugees residing in a host country. Do they lose their rights as citizens by leaving their country of citizenship and are therefore no longer to be regarded as political subjects? In this context, a distinction must be made between the legal or formal understanding of citizenship and its performative perspective and the way these two may clash, for example in refugee situations (Nyers, 2015). While refugees may legally not be considered citizens of their host countries, they oftentimes perceive themselves as political subjects and make claims traditionally reserved to citizens. Thereby, refugees, in a way, constitute themselves as citizens or at least as people with the same rights, including the right to a political agenda, even if their host state and its authorities may not recognize or accept them as such. By claiming rights reserved to citizens, refugees fundamentally challenge societal and political understandings, question core concepts of citizenship, representation and recognition and demand a re-consideration of the dominant legal regime in their host countries which excluded them in the first place (Nyers, 2015). This is closely linked to the ideas of an everyday approach but stands in stark contrast to the widespread image of refugees as voiceless and powerless which expects refugees to be and act as victims, to use the aid they receive in an appropriate manner, to be grateful for their accommodation in a refugee camp, and to not cause any issues, raise demands or follow an agenda (Agier, 2011; Oskay, 2016).

However, while refugees, especially in refugee camps, might be in a situation that inflicts neediness, hopelessness, and misery upon them, they are by no means voiceless or powerless, but rather in a challenging situation which might limit their agency due to implemented regulations and prescribed roles or changes the ways agency can be performed (Msabah, 2019). But nevertheless, refugees still have wishes and demands, make claims and exercise agency, even if the ways and forms differ from traditional understandings and concepts of agency. In this context, the Arendtian sense of politics

“as a form of activity concerned with addressing problems of living together in a shared world of plurality and difference” (Häkli & Kallio, 2014, p. 183)

is very fitting and in line with the everyday approach, as it points out how politics are delinked from citizenship and arise simply through coexistence with other individuals and the sharing of space. Thus, politics and agency can arise in various and unexpected forms and are related to tensions between the individual and the collective, or between distinct groups, whether these groups are citizens of the same country or not (Nyers, 2015).

At this point, one should recall the previously mentioned diverse kinds of agency, including individual agency, focused on achieving goals through one's own means, proxy agency, meaning achieving one's goals through others, and collective agency, the achievement of a common goal through joint means (Kanal & Rottmann, 2021). Hence, it is important to consider agency apart from citizenship, and acknowledge the different forms and shapes it may take as well as the various contexts it may arise in (Caraus, 2018; Häkli & Kallio, 2014). As highlighted in the everyday approach, context is important to understand agency and its manifestations, as social and political structures ultimately define what is possible, shape the forms agency may take, provide such actions with meaning, and allow for adequate interpretation (Oskay, 2016). Consequently, certain acts, in particular seemingly mundane practices, may not be considered as the exercise of agency in one situation but might be in another. This is the case in the context of migration and refugeehood, as these contexts are quite unique and highly limit the exercise of agency. At the same time however, migration causes a political, social, cultural, and economic transformation, and allows for new kinds of agency to arise (Nyers, 2015). These can be observed in a number of formal and non-formal, belligerent, and peaceful, individual, and collective, mundane, and extraordinary activities that may, amongst other things, challenge the conditions in refugee camps, demand social rights and justice, or reject the limitations imposed on refugees (Agier, 2011; Olivius, 2017; Otto & Hoffmann, 2022). It is therefore important to look beyond the established categories of political and social action and consider the daily practices of individuals and collectives and how these may impact the experiences, encounters, and everyday lives of refugee camp residents (Guillaume & Huysmans, 2019).

By exercising agency refugees reject the concept of refugeehood imposed on them, as well as the notion that agency can only be exercised by citizens, and hence the monopolization of political subjectivity by the nation-state. Thereby, they reshape the concept of political community, identity, and practice, as well as the prescribed conceptions of a refugee (Caraus, 2018). In a way, what makes refugee agency so unique, is the sole fact that refugees claim agency, and demand self-determination and self-reliance, as these demands on their own, even without achieving them, already constitute a form of agency and challenge traditional understandings and perceptions. Through these kinds of actions, such as demanding an improvement of their situation or arranging education, medical care, or work, refugees appropriate civil rights, despite their unrecognized status. Thereby they demand a redefinition of the common notion of agency and political participation, as well as a re-consideration of the subjects of the political community entitled to make claims (Bojadžijev and Karakayali, 2010). In this vein, it could be argued that refugees are not claiming these rights on the basis of a particular citizenship, but simply as human beings which as Caraus (2018) suggests “behave in that very moment as citizens of the world”. Thus, they challenge the exclusionary concept of citizenship and its control, demand their recognition as political subjects, and create a new social reality (Nyers, 2015). This is linked to the everyday approach which also challenges the supremacy of states and formal institutions in regard to politics and emphasizes the importance of the agency exercised by subaltern groups which tends to be overlooked in traditional understandings of political action (Guillaume & Huysmans, 2019).

Having gained insight into some of the challenges for the exercise of refugee agency, as well as its effects on the greater understanding of political participation and citizenship, the following discusses the significance of engagement and agency for refugees.

Refugee engagement and activism have become an increasingly salient and widely discussed topic in the context of protracted refugee situations (Omata, 2017). Through active participation, refugees are not only able to regain their dignity and self-determination, protect their interests and assert their claims, but also envision a brighter future for themselves and reclaim a sense of control (Omata, 2017; Turner, 2015). Moreover, by exercising agency despite the limited political rights and freedoms given to them, refugees demand visibility and participation in public life, reject and challenge their imagined vulnerability, victimization, and speechlessness, and state their desire to be considered as human beings with ambitions and needs, including access to education and livelihoods (Agier, 2011). Generally speaking, refugees’ aims are often related to regaining some level of normalcy known from their previous lives in their home country through the access to (financial) assistance, education, and documentation, as well as the right to work, freedom of movement, and humanized living conditions

and treatment by representatives of the host country, international organizations, and other involved actors (Jacobsen, 2019; Safouane et al., 2020). Hence, refugees' struggle for agency and self-determination is intricately linked to their struggle against paternalism and for normality and the creation of a new place in the world where they are accepted, included, and integrated and can voice their concerns and be heard (Nyers, 2015; Turton, 2003).

As mentioned above, and in regard to the everyday approach, the forms of migrant agency and political participation may take quite different forms than what is usually understood as common practices, and might comprise more mundane and everyday activities, which in the context of migration and refugeehood, gain new importance (Papadopoulos & Tsianos, 2013). This is also related to unique power constellations, especially in refugee camps, which create very specific social structures and hierarchies that determine what can and cannot be done and by whom (Aburamadan et al., 2020). By exercising agency refugees challenge these strict hierarchies, demand renegotiation of their own stance within them and challenge the division of power and resources as well as prevalent structures of dominance and oppression (Perera, 2013). Through these systems of oppression and dominance, as well as through the management of refugees in camps, refugees also gain opportunities to perform agency in the form of transgression, quiet resistance, and conformity (Safouane et al., 2020). In this context it is important to recall the previously outlined forms of agency, as categorized by Oskay (2016) who separates between overt types of agency, including rejection and assimilation, and covert types of agency, including manipulation and bypassing. These categories are used in the following, to analyze the ways refugees manage to surpass restrictions and obstacles in order to mobilize, exercise agency, and influence their current and future situation (research questions 1 & 5). The examples below further illustrate the everyday approach and show how the context of refugee camps leads to a redefinition of the meaning of everyday actions and practices, which become politically significant and thereby challenge the prevailing understanding of politics.

Rejection as a form of agency includes acts such as protesting or occupation of spaces, as well as generally actions organized in defiance against imposed immobility, invisibility and other regulations linked to refugees' legal status (Nyers, 2015). This may also include more mundane or everyday acts rejecting the rules imposed by camp or government officials, including petty agreements with camp staff, trading of refugee cards, and police corruption, or verbal acts such as stating one's disagreement and rejection of certain rules, or assigned identities (Agier, 2011). Examples of the exercise of agency through rejection in Za'atari camp include the revolts that began in mid-2012 and continued throughout 2013. During these, camp residents expressed their dissatisfaction with their living conditions in the camp, specifically the lack of adequate shelter, lack of access to an income, unmet

basic needs, and restrictions on the freedom of movement, thereby rejecting the conditions imposed on them (Pasha, 2020). Another example is the creation of the informal market within Za'atari camp, and its informal electrification, which showed refugees' rejection of a number of rules and regulations, including the prohibition of economic activity and business relations with the Jordanian economy, as well as their appropriation of space and hence rejection of its originally envisioned purpose (Dalal, 2015; Pasha, 2020). The creation of the informal market was, however, also a notable example of peer-to-peer support, social redistribution, and steps towards self-determination and self-reliance, and thereby a rejection of the common image of refugees as helpless and aid-needing. It showed that refugees in fact can help and produce their own solutions and are not necessarily burdens to host communities, as they can find ways to provide for themselves if allowed (Pasha, 2020; Safouane et al., 2020).

In terms of assimilation, on the other hand, which is the second form of overt agency, refugees use international and national norms and standards, including amongst others human rights, gender equality, and key ideas of democracy, to make their own claims, and act within internationally defined and accepted concepts (Olivius, 2017). Thus, while these ideas and concepts are generally used in the context of educating more "traditional" refugee populations and teaching them more "modern" ways of thinking, refugees have in the past used them for their own agenda and mobilization, for example to demand (political) recognition and more equality, and denounce unacceptable circumstances (Agier, 2011; Olivius, 2017). Such a case is described by Olivius (2017) in relation to the use of international women's rights instruments in refugee camps in Thailand to increase local women's organizations' participation. Further examples are mentioned by Oskay (2016), one being the adaptation of international refugee and human rights language by refugee organizations in their protests for the provision of better services.

Manipulation, as a covert form of agency, may include the appropriation of strategies used to govern refugees, as well as the re-purposing of systems and adaptations of their intended usage (Olivius, 2017). In this way, refugees may adapt these systems to their own advantage and expand their understanding of regulations to better suit their own intentions. An example of this would be using the voucher and food distribution system in Za'atari camp for the refugees' own benefit by collecting and reselling the vouchers and (part of) the food rations to obtain cash that can be used for a broader range of things (Agier, 2011; Dalal, 2015). Another example of the manipulation of systems for refugees' own benefit is connected to the initial application for asylum and later questions in this regard. Refugees may choose to adapt their story, highlight certain parts of their journey, select some striking facts, or leave out some parts, to gain greater chances of being granted refugee status or even

longer-term permission to stay in a host country (Agier, 2011). In this sense, refugees manipulate the asylum system through their knowledge or anticipation of officials' expectations and their assumptions about what might strengthen their claim when they testify about their own refugee experience (Agier, 2011). This does not mean that the refugees are lying when giving testimony, but rather that they may frame certain events that happened during their journey to their own advantage or retell their experiences in a certain, supposedly better way to emphasize certain aspects, omit some aspects and support their statement overall.

Finally, bypassing, as the second kind of covert agency, means the evasion of authority and creation of alternatives. In the case of Za'atari this included for example the modifications of shelters such as the moving of tents and other accommodations, their regrouping as well as actual alterations to the accommodations. While this was in part done to create a more familiar atmosphere, a more home-like feeling and a regrouping of residents in line with pre-displacement social, tribal, and familial ties, it was also a bypassing of the official design of Za'atari camp and the officials' concept (Pasha, 2020). However, this re-design meant better suitability, an increase in the feeling of safety and connection, as well as a better expression of the residents' values, needs and perspectives, while nevertheless evading previous structures.

In addition to these refugee-led actions on a rather individual basis, some official initiatives have been established to encourage refugees' agency and increase their participation. Thus, the Jordanian government, to a limited extent, allows Syrian refugees to take matters into their own hands. An example is the creation of local committees comprised of tribal leaders and other respected community members who are charged with policing tasks such as ensuring the rule of law within the refugee community (Riach & James, 2016). Another concrete example is the Syrian Family Clan Council (SFCC) which is a space for Syrian refugees to voice concerns regarding poor living conditions, camp and community management or violations of regulations and laws. The SFCC is, like the local committees, comprised of respected community members such as Imams. It serves as an alternative space for dealing with criminal and civil legal procedures and to solve disputes, through negotiation, mediation, and counseling (Riach & James, 2016). In addition to the SFCC and local committees, a local NGO created the Syrian Lawyers Initiative, which adapted a bottom-up approach to refugees' legal empowerment, by providing education and training to support and increase their knowledge on related topics, and thereby the assurance of human rights standards (Riach & James, 2016).

As has become clear, despite restrictions and limitations imposed by Jordanian officials and international actors, a number of ways through which refugees manage to exercise agency exist and

several official initiatives focused on the empowerment of refugees and their exercise of agency have been established. Nevertheless, these examples also emphasize refugees' limited self-determination, participation, and exercise of agency. Furthermore, they illustrate how small actions, such as adapting one's accommodation to personal needs, which would be considered mundane in other contexts, become more significant in the context of displacement and accommodation in refugee camps, where authorities fear that too many alterations and improvements to living conditions will make refugees feel too comfortable and reluctant to leave the camp (Aburamadan et al., 2020). This also emphasizes the minimal scope for meaningful refugee agency in the Za'atari refugee camp, and refugees' limited opportunities for participation due to fears of disorder, unravel or potential uprisings. Moreover, it points to the need for continued work to overcome unfounded assumptions and stereotypes that constantly influence officials' attitude towards refugees and the regulations and restrictions applied in refugee camps (Pasha, 2021a). In addition, this underscores the importance of everyday practices and the need to shift the focus in analyzing agency away from formal participation and pivotal actions to more mundane and temporal exercises of resistance, contestation and negotiation and their impact on larger structures.

6.6 Political and Ethical Implications for the Governance of Refugees

Having discussed the prevailing dichotomies and issues within the refugee regime, as well as possibilities for refugee agency despite constraints, the following briefly outlines some of the implications these findings could have, including for the UNHCR and local communities, as well as in the specific Jordanian context.

The pivotal role of the UNHCR within the refugee regime is evident, even though its efforts are simultaneously constrained by its dependence on external actors. The organization exerts substantial influence through its advocacy and coordination functions. However, to enhance its impact and gain increased support from relevant stakeholders, the UNHCR should pursue its mission more strategically and diligently (Loescher & Milner, 2012). Additionally, in order to address the existing discrepancies between the UNHCR's established frameworks and values and their practical implementation, the introduction of improved monitoring mechanisms has been suggested. These mechanisms would serve to ensure heightened adherence to protection standards and advancements in empowerment projects by both UNHCR staff and national entities.

However, it is also crucial to underscore that the UNHCR, in isolation, cannot comprehensively address the complexities of the refugee regime. Consequently, an increased focus on joint efforts and shared responsibility with actors from the development, security, and humanitarian sectors, as well

as local authorities and stakeholders, is essential (Loescher & Milner, 2012). The involvement of a broad range of actors is particularly important in view of the prolonged displacement of Syrian refugees and the resulting need to provide better local opportunities. This includes a more targeted form of assistance which takes into account local circumstances and the specific situation of individuals or groups of displaced persons. Thus, it is important to recognize that there is no universal approach that will suit all refugees and ensure that their rights and needs are met, but that different people have unique needs and aspirations. Consequently, it is important to involve refugees in decision-making processes and to ensure that they can actively participate in processes affecting their situation and lives. Special attention should also be paid to the younger generations and youth in this context. They should be actively included and considered in decision making processes and their needs should be addressed in order to reduce discontent, foster social cohesion, and avoid radicalization. Moreover, it is important to assure them of a decent future to prevent them from sinking into despair and frustration due to a lack of opportunities and a sense of hopelessness prevailing in refugee camps. The inclusion of displaced people from diverse backgrounds is also important to identify and address systemic and structural problems at an early stage and to promote stability and security, benefiting both the refugee community and the host society (Purkey, 2013).

In addition to a more inclusive, participatory, and targeted approach of humanitarian actors, a greater focus on economic empowerment would be beneficial to enhance economic opportunities. This would allow for the generation of a sustainable income, promote self-reliance, and ultimately lead to a decrease of dependence on humanitarian aid. Humanitarian aid, as has become clear, is on its own, an unsustainable approach to protracted refugee situations due to excessive costs and numerous negative effects for the affected communities.

As previously highlighted, however, exclusive reliance on economic empowerment has proven inadequate and unsustainable. Its effectiveness is intricately linked to the rule of law, the legal empowerment of refugees and the assurance of their rights. Consequently, integrating economic strategies with a rights-based approach becomes essential. A critical challenge in this context pertains to the absence of a well-defined framework and reliable information regarding the rights accessible to refugees. Addressing this gap necessitates intensified information campaigns, the provision of legal advisory services, and the enhancement of refugees' capacities to navigate legal processes. This would establish a robust foundation for fostering improvements in the lives of refugees and underscore the importance of urging states and other stakeholders to fulfill their obligations (Purkey, 2013). Enhancing refugees' legal knowledge and skills to navigate complex systems, could also prove

beneficial for reform and state-building processes upon repatriation of displaced populations to their country of origin, and support the creation of stable institutions (Purkey, 2013).

In addition to refugees' legal empowerment, structural changes related to the legal system are needed to overcome dual systems and ensure better implementation of international frameworks. These changes should be focused on adopting more inclusive policies and frameworks and addressing the absence of a strong protection system in the national Jordanian context. Inclusive policies could lead to the inclusion of refugees and their camps into national and international development plans and would aid the creation of a common system for all. A common system would support refugees' inclusion and provide better access to social and financial protection systems. Moreover, inclusive policies would increase interactions and participation, allow refugees to legally access local markets, and to actively participate in the local economy, and thereby contribute to a more sustainable development, strengthen refugees' self-reliance, as well as support the local economy of the host state (3RP, 2023; Crisp, 2009).

These implications and related suggestions for the various stakeholders of the refugee regime could prove to be important contributions to sustainable solutions. They would increase refugees' opportunities to exercise agency and become active agents in their lives as well as in larger processes. Moreover, they would help to recognize the already existing forms of refugee agency and the ways refugees are already shaping their everyday lives and influencing established approaches and norms. In addition, they would aid the development of host states and the wider region by using human potential and resources, supporting local economies, and aiding the reconstruction of local systems and the creation of stable institutions upon refugees' return to their country of origin.

7 Conclusion

This thesis dealt with the agency of displaced persons and the persisting dichotomies within the refugee regime with regard to the participation and agency of displaced persons. On the one hand, the approach of the international community through international frameworks and in particular the role of the UNHCR was analyzed. On the other hand, a specific study of the Jordanian context was conducted to discuss Jordan's national refugee framework and the coherence between and coexistence of international and national refugee policies. Hence, the work examined the adaptation of the national to the international frameworks. Moreover, a case study on displaced Syrians in the Za'atari refugee camp shed light on the actual implementation of the international and national framework and provided insights into refugees' living conditions and their possibilities for agency. Thus, the work also looked at the implementation on the ground and examined whether the written laws were compatible with the situation on the ground or whether any discrepancies existed. In this context, it was also examined how the specific structures on the ground, including the camp structures, the environment, and local conditions, affect the exercise of agency. In addition, it was analyzed how refugees can circumvent restrictions and constraints, whereby the findings in this context include a general presentation of possible scopes of action for refugees.

To analyze all of the above, the thesis aimed at providing answers to five main research questions, which have been discussed throughout this thesis. These included:

1. How do refugees politically mobilize to affect their current situations, peacebuilding, and displacement resolution processes?
2. How might the law strengthen or hinder refugees' effort to become active agents?
3. What is the role of UNHCR, and how does it hinder or support refugee agency, their involvement and activism?
4. What are the dichotomies between official UNHCR and national guidelines and their implementation on the ground?
5. How do displaced populations manage to surpass restrictions and obstacles and manage to take an active role in shaping their current and future situations, including not only everyday concerns, but also larger processes?

In this context, the concept of empowerment and its role and practice within displacement situations was discussed in detail. To this end, the present research not only provided an overview of the topic of empowerment in previous research, but also considered the concept of agency as a theoretical framework and outlined its various forms and possible practices. It was emphasized that agency

should not be seen as a narrowly fixed concept, but rather in broader terms comprising a wide array of practices. Moreover, agency should always be seen in its contextual frame, and the interplay between agency and context must be considered when analyzing the exercise of agency. Thus, contextual factors may constrain or enable the mobilization and organization of displaced people, and certain practices might only gain meaning when analyzed in their specific context. This applies to many seemingly mundane actions that would normally not attract much attention, but which become significant once they are performed in refugee camps and under constraining conditions.

In addition to the theoretical framework of agency, for its methodology, the thesis adopted a policy implementation and analysis approach. This was used to analyze various international and national frameworks on agency and refugee empowerment in order to obtain a comprehensive picture of the agency approach of international organizations and other relevant actors. This included examining the different responsibilities in the international and Jordanian context alongside relevant frameworks including international laws, customary international law, international frameworks, and responses to the Syrian refugee crisis, as well as the Jordan's legal context, inclusion policies and the national response plan to the Syrian crisis.

In this regard, it became clear that while Jordan has worked to establish clearer legal frameworks and implementation mechanisms to address the refugee crisis, it is still struggling to find and implement appropriate and sustainable solutions to address the impact of mass displacement and other political-economic pressures (De Bel-Air, 2016; Yahya et al., 2018). Similarly, even though the international community has stepped up its efforts to support Syrian refugees, it continues to encounter difficulties in meeting its obligations. In this vein, it is also important to note, that in recent years, criticism has increased not only regarding the general situation and management of refugees in Jordan, but specifically regarding the MoU between the Jordanian government and the UNHCR.

It has been argued that the MoU is outdated and no longer reflects the developments of the last decade and the situation of Syrian refugees today (Wali, 2020). In addition to doubts about the timeliness of the MoU, critics have also raised concerns about the overall cooperation between Jordan and UNHCR, particularly regarding the extent of the Jordanian government's power over the refugee situation and the implications for refugees' rights and living situations. While UNHCR was initially focused on life-saving measures such as the provision of food, shelter, water and health, this focus has shifted towards a securitized approach and its work is increasingly limited by national concerns. In this manner, it has been argued that UNHCR, like states, has increasingly transformed itself into a security actor that assists states like Jordan with the maintenance of law and order and in monitoring, identifying, managing, and deporting problematized members of the refugee community, rather than

advocating for and guaranteeing the rights and concerns of refugees (Pasha, 2021a). Moreover, critics have expressed their concern about UNHCR's role in the establishment of unequal hierarchies of power in the camps. Further, criticism has concerned the lack of information and clarity provided to refugees regarding their rights, as well as the complex regulatory environment, which makes refugees' lives more challenging and prevents their exercise of agency (Bellamy et al., 2017; Pasha, 2021a).

These findings were further underpinned by a thorough analysis of the concrete situation of refugees in Jordan and specifically of those living in the Za'atari refugee camp, as well as of the fulfillment of their basic needs, their economic situation, and their access to education and work. In this context, it was emphasized that meeting human rights and guaranteeing economic, political, and social participation is crucial for all human beings, in any situation, not only for their wellbeing but also to ensure a dignified life and self-reliance. This is especially true for people affected by refugee situations, whether they live in camps, urban settlements or among host societies.

However, throughout the research, it became clear that given the emergency character annotated to refugee situations, it is often believed that short-term restrictions and limitations to rights and participation are legitimized by other issues and concerns, including meeting the immediate physical needs of refugees, as well as counteracting security threats and ensuring stability. This is, however, a highly problematic approach to human rights and basic human needs, especially once crises become prolonged and surpass an immediate emergency nature, as is the case for many refugee situations across the world. Continuously limiting refugees' basic rights as well as their economic opportunities, political participation, and social inclusion, may have severe consequences for their personal wellbeing, their sense of dignity and self-determination, as well as the co-existence in camps or urban settlements and the overall sustainability of refugee situations. Allowing refugees to exercise agency is therefore crucial to overcome a sense of being warehoused and to ensure refugees can live a self-determined and dignified life whereby they can provide for themselves and thereby become independent from international aid and benefits.

In this context, the importance of economic empowerment was emphasized. Economic empowerment comprises various approaches, including vocational skills training programs which provide refugees with the necessary skills to match the current labor market, but can also change dominant culture and for example transform mindsets in regard to gender roles. This is particularly beneficial for women who often report strengthened self-confidence and increased self-esteem from such programs (Jabbar & Zaza, 2015).

However, for the successful economic empowerment and integration of refugees in the labor market, diverse perspectives must align. This includes the perspectives of host states, shaped by their legal regulations; refugees, influenced by their access to the labor market and challenges they encounter; the host community, which plays a crucial role in recognizing, approving, or reacting to refugee employment; and the donor community, whose impact extends to developmental aid, as well as initiatives and support concerning working rights (Mencutek & Nashwan, 2021). This emphasizes the importance of cooperation and involvement of a range of actors in the design and implementation of empowerment programs and the development of integration processes. In addition, the thesis also pointed to the interconnectedness of economic empowerment with other forms of empowerment such as legal empowerment. Thus, economic empowerment ultimately requires a profound and coherent legal framework.

Therefore, the general lack of guaranteed rights for Syrian refugees in Jordan is concerning. This is further aggravated by the fact that Jordan refuses to commit to international refugee rights frameworks and to recognize refugees as such, which affects refugees' legal stance and their general well-being. Legal empowerment is one of the bases for active participation in a society, affects refugees' economic opportunities by providing basic human rights, and guarantees a minimum standard of humane treatment. The lack of access to legal services and resources, due to shortcomings in funding and staff as well as due to a lack of clear and consistent information tailored to Syrian refugees' needs and situations, leaves refugees in Jordan in a state of limbo and uncertainty. Oftentimes, refugees in Jordan are unaware of their rights and their possibilities in cases where rights are not being met, as for example in exploitative employment contexts. As is becoming clear, despite its efforts, Jordan continues to provide limited rights and security to Syrian refugees, and their access to basic services, facilities, and employment remains restricted.

This is well related to the last part of the thesis which dealt with the comparison of the situation envisioned in international and national legal frameworks and the actual situation on the ground. In summary, it was found that although many international frameworks and laws emphasize the importance of refugee representation and have turned to participatory approaches in theory, these approaches are not (fully) implemented in practice and lead to discrepancies between the target and actual state. Surveys have found that a majority of affected people still felt that their views were not considered in the design and implementation of humanitarian programs and many refugees felt abandoned and forgotten, causing feelings of desolation and despair (Yahya et al., 2018). Consequently, a substantial gap between the policy and implementation level in regard to

empowerment policies, inclusion measures and rights-based approaches remains (Metcalf-Hough et al., 2019; Purkey, 2013).

This substantial gap between the policy and implementation level in regard to empowerment policies, inclusion measures and rights-based approaches may be related to insufficient funding. Moreover, fears regarding the empowerment of refugees and the effects they might have for the host society, the state as well as local integration and long-term solutions, likely contribute to host states' reluctance to support refugees' exercise of agency. This points out that much needs to still be done for human rights to be successfully implemented in protracted refugee situations and guaranteed to all human beings, not just on paper but on the ground, no matter people's status. For this reason, the international community and its stakeholders must also better recognize and adequately incorporate the diversity of refugees' experiences and needs. To this end, it would be beneficial if actors in the field would better comprehend refugees' agency and its benefits, and view refugees as "normal" people to be treated as active agents worthy of dignity, political participation, and self-governance (Metcalf-Hough et al., 2019; Olivius, 2017).

As has become clear, there seems to be inherent contradictions which emerge from prevailing practices of de-politicizing refugee camps and their inhabitants on the one hand and emphasizing refugees' agency and encouraging their active participation, on the other hand (Omata, 2017). Thus, much of the governance of refugees remains premised on a narrow, dualistic image of refugees as victims to be saved and threats to be controlled (Olivius, 2017). In Jordan, this is the case despite the government's efforts to improve refugees' situation. Therefore, it is argued that further work is needed to ensure a successful implementation of frameworks and more consistency between national frameworks and regulations, and (basic) international law and agreements.

At the same time, however, a more fundamental discussion on the interplay between migration policy, international law and the global political landscape that has developed in recent years should also be pointed out. While this thesis has thoroughly analyzed the international and national legal framework and regulations applicable to refugees and their right to agency, focusing on the dichotomies between the wording and practice of such frameworks and pointing to the need of better implementation, this discussion centers on the question of whether international human rights and refugee law should still be seen as the solution to the challenges posed by global migration, or whether, these frameworks might not actually contribute to these challenges. Ralph Wilde (2022), for example, discusses the crisis of international law and challenges its purely utilitarian nature in dealing with migration issues, arguing that it fails to address the needs of migrants and thereby enables potentially detrimental

measures such as tightened migration controls and visa restrictions which cause migrants to resort to dangerous and irregular means.

Thus, in line with this thesis, which points to dichotomies in the implementation of international law and legal obligations, recent discussions have also revolved around the inherent contradictions in international law and migration policy, which allow for both a protectionist approach and restrictive measures in relation to migration. Like this thesis, others have also argued that the current state of international law and migration frameworks is insufficient to ensure the respect of migrants' rights, leads to deficiencies in the protection of migrants and may even contradict universal values such as equality and human dignity. For example, measures aimed at strengthening borders, restricting migration, and failing to adequately protect migrants are often in line with international law (Wilde, 2022). It becomes clear that international (migration) law has a dual character and can promote inequality, contribute to the preservation of colonial power structures, restrict opportunities, and merely benefits a certain limited group of states and people. In this context, Wilde (2022) argues that a different, more nuanced approach to policymaking and policy analysis is needed to properly understand international law, its institutions, and its relevance to migration policy. Although a thorough analysis of this issue is beyond the scope of this thesis, it is nevertheless an important aspect that should be mentioned for further discussion and reflection.

After discussing these prevailing dichotomies and their potential causes, the final section of this paper concluded by outlining some possible implications for refugee governance, thus highlighting some options forward for the various actors involved in the refugee regime. It was pointed out that all actors within the global refugee regime, including the international community, UNHCR and other organizations, as well as national actors, must make a concerted effort to find lasting solutions to the refugee crisis if genuine empowerment and participation of refugees is to be achieved. This includes, on the one hand, improving refugee protection in the host state, on the other hand, committing the international community, and in particular the countries of the Global North, to take their part in the responsibility-sharing. This would comprise continuous funding, ensuring compliance with international standards and frameworks as well as supporting sustainable participatory approaches. Such approaches would support the empowerment of refugees, thereby equipping individuals and communities with resources, increasing their room for the effective exercise of agency, ensuring their access to decision-making processes, and improving their ability to shape their own circumstances (Meyer, 2006).

Overall, this thesis aimed to adopt a broad scope to the topic of refugee agency and used a variety of approaches in order to provide insights into the issue of refugee participation. It not only outlined a

holistic theoretical framework and discussion on the concept of agency and other key terminology in the field, but also combined policy implementation research and policy process analysis to ensure a more holistic methodology to the topic. Furthermore, the study provided an extensive overview of the main actors, frameworks and regulations influencing the international and national Jordanian refugee context. Thereby, the thesis provided a solid foundation for the analysis of refugees' agency and specifically the potential dichotomies between the envisioned and the actual situation. Hereby, it also discussed the role of various actors, in particular the UNHCR, in supporting or limiting refugees' agency. Moreover, the thesis was concerned with pointing to the many ways in which refugees manage to exercise agency and take active roles despite the constrained circumstances of their lives in refugee camps.

Despite this thorough research, however, the study has also encountered some limitations and leaves questions for further research. These are briefly discussed in the following.

One of the concerns of this thesis has been the use of secondary data to analyze the implementation of the international framework on the ground. As no first-hand data was collected on the ground in Jordan, specifically regarding the situation in Za'atari, the results are based on interpretations of the reports of international organizations and other actors on the ground. Linked to this is the fact that, due to space constraints, it was not possible to include as broad a range of evaluation material as would have been ideal for a thorough analysis of the practical implementation of empowerment projects and frameworks on the ground. Thus, the study could have been elaborated much further by including a larger number of primary and secondary sources to gain a more thorough insight into the topic and the specific circumstances in the Za'atari refugee camp. This could also have led to a clearer picture of the specific dichotomies and potential starting points for adaptation and change. Nonetheless, the aim of this thesis was to gain as much insight as possible with the available data and within the given framework, to provide a general overview and to highlight the most salient issues.

Thus, given the scope of the research questions of this thesis and the objectives of the study, the used methodology established through a mix of policy implementation research and policy process analysis seemed to be the most suitable choice. It allowed for new insights into the topic of refugee agency and in particular, the dichotomies between intended outcomes and the actual situation on the ground. Moreover, the resort to a broad range of available sources, including both primary and secondary sources, allowed for the collection of a wide range of data, including international frameworks and evaluation reports, which provided a thorough insight into the current legal and actual situation, as well as the possibility of an exhaustive analysis of the topic of refugee agency in Jordanian refugee camps.

In addition to constraints regarding the availability of data and the use of sources, it is important to reiterate that the situation on the ground and the framework conditions are constantly evolving. Therefore, it may be difficult to generalize the results, and the insights provided can only be a momentary reflection of the situation at the time of the research. This is further the case, as much of the analysis was related to the specific case of Za'atari refugee camp in Jordan. As other camps may have different structures, are managed in different ways, offer different forms of support, or provide better or worse access to services, displaced populations would most likely encounter different situations. This would also mean that they would respond in different ways, as their responses would be adapted to the specific circumstances and their strategies for exercising agency adjusted accordingly. Nevertheless, one should note that other parts of this work, in particular the theoretical sections, are indeed transferable to other case studies. This is also the case for the general forms of agency outlined and adapted throughout this thesis. Moreover, the findings of the thesis may be reflected in other case studies and could provide a valuable insight for further research in the field of refugee agency, in particular as a comparison to other studies focused on the context of protracted refugee situations and the interplay between structure and agency.

Thus, as has already been highlighted, much more in-depth research could be carried out in relation to this topic and the specific issues that this work has already addressed. To begin with, a more in-depth analysis of the used data and the frameworks outlined could be done if time allowed. In addition, further insights could be gained if more concrete initiatives by national and international actors were included. Moreover, further research on the topic of refugee agency could include both, the use of a broader set of data, including for example a wider range of international projects and evaluation reports to widen the approach and gain more generalizable results, but also, the use of a narrower approach could provide important insights. Such a narrow approach may focus on a specific aspect or research question related to this topic, such as the focus on just one type of empowerment or the focus on a specific sub-group of Syrian refugees, such as women or youth. In addition, future research could focus on a more systemic approach. Such a study could further expand on and include a more in-depth discussion about the relation between agency and structure. In this regard, a comparative study of various cases could be conducted and thereby potentially lead to more generalizable results on the effect of circumstances for refugees' exercise of agency and their possibilities for self-determination. This could be insightful for international actors and those in charge of refugee management to better adapt their strategies and approaches. Such an adaptation could, if done successfully and coherently, further advance refugees rights and ensure a better participation and a more equal approach to refugee management.

Beyond this, however, questions about the role of NGOs and CBOs also arose during my research. Thus, I came across a wide range of actors and their contribution to the exercise of agency within displaced communities. As this thesis has mainly focused on national and international actors and initiatives, a lot of projects conducted by other actors were largely disregarded. Therefore, a focus on grassroots initiatives could be a focal point for further research to analyze how their work contributes to refugee empowerment. This would help to gain a better understanding of the various actors involved in the context of refugee camps. Moreover, it would provide deeper insight into the benefits of initiatives and projects that focus on the agency and empowerment of displaced people, as well as the different outcomes achieved between NGOs, CBOs and international or national actors. This could also be useful to better understand how different actors interact with each other, as well as to determine how different actors gain access to displaced people. This could be important to develop a better understanding of which actors play a key role in the context of refugee camps and refugee empowerment and which methods could be useful to maximize access to these marginalized communities. This could ensure that all migrant groups, including those who may be affected by several types of marginalization, receive the necessary support to lead a self-determined and self-sufficient life. This could also prevent such groups from being neglected, which in turn would be in line with the SDGs and thus the objective of the international community to "Leave No One Behind".

Lastly, as mentioned above, the discussion on the crisis of international law in the context of migration policy could be an interesting topic for further research linking the fields of international law, migration studies and humanitarian policy. Such research could be of a normative, philosophical nature, analyzing the underlying principles that inform migration policy and debates about the rights and responsibilities of states, the international community, and individuals. This kind of research could contribute to a more nuanced approach to the complex normative issues related to migration and refugee protection and support policy debates and advocacy work related to migration and refugee movements.

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