Breaking Boundaries: Re-assembling the Refugee Camp through Home-making Practices of the Camp Dwellers

Examining Refugee Agency in Sustainable Processes and Assemblage Formations

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ABSTRACT

Breaking Boundaries: Re-assembling the Refugee Camp through Home-making Practices of the Camp Dwellers

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Scholars often study refugee camps as hierarchical structures, with a predominant focus on the authorities in charge of the camps (i.e., Agier, 2010; Ticktin, 2011). However, this approach often overlooks the role of refugees as key co-creators of the camps. This thesis seeks to explore the agency of refugees in the camp development by examining their everyday practices that give camp dwellers a sense of belonging (i.e., *home-making* practices). Specifically, I seek to shift the analysis of refugee camps by placing refugees at the center of the inquiry. Through three manuscript essays, I explore the following research themes: 1- The range of *home-making* practices that are mobilized in the refugee camp, 2- The level of agency the refugees have to shape, conceive and imagine their own living spaces and the factors or determinants that influence this agency, 3- Finally, I seek to understand how the camps are spatially and temporally constructed and how this is defined by exchanges, interactions and flows within and beyond their boundaries. Drawing on theories of *home-making* (Brun & Fabos, 2015; Elmasri, 2020; Dudley, 2011), *assemblage* (Deleuze & Guattari, 1987; De Landa, 2006; McFarlane, 2009; Dovey, 2010), and refugee agency (Ramadan, 2012; Abourahmeh, 2015), and utilizing a methodology that blends empirical and archival research, this study examines three Palestinian refugee camps in Jordan: Baqa'a, Al-Husn, and Talbiyeh. The findings demonstrate that refugees exercise agency at both the individual dwelling and camp-wide scale. The evidence reveals that through engaging in different everyday tasks (such as gardening, masonry, textile crafts, etc.) the refugees develop a deep sense of place and identity that transcends the physical space of the camp. However, the ability to do so is conditioned by the resources, social and political networks and geographic attributes of their respective camp space. The ultimate objective of this thesis is to identify new solutions that engage refugees as co-creators in camp assemblage, thereby improving living conditions in refugee camps.

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List of Abbreviations

AR	Annual Report
CIP	Camp Improvement Programme
CRC	Community Rehabilitation Centre
DPA	Department of the Palestinian Affairs
DW	Deutsche Welle
EOP	Environmentalism of the Poor
FPCs	Solar flat plate collectors
GIZ	The German Society for International Cooperation
ICIP	Infrastructure & Camp Improvement Programme
JVL	Jewish Virtual Library
NGOs	Non-Governmental Organizations
OBSP	Occupation, building, servicing and planning
PLO	Palestinian Liberation Organization
POSB	planning, occupation, servicing and building
PSBO	planning, servicing, building and occupation
PV	photovoltaic system
QIZ	Qualified Industrial Zones
RJGC	Royal Jordanian Geographical Center
RSSD	Relief and Social Services Department
SDGs	Sustainable Development Goals
SHC	Special Hardship Cases
UN	United Nation
UNHCR	United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees
UNGA	The UN General Assembly
UNRWA	United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East
USD	United States Dollar
WCED	World Commission on Environment and Development

Preface

As a Jordanian of Palestinian origin who grew up mainly in Jordan, a country that hosts the largest number of Palestinian refugees, I am intimately familiar with the scene of a refugee camp, as are all Jordanians. While the terms "refugee" and "camp" may carry negative connotations among non-refugees in Jordan, refugees themselves take pride in being referred to as such, or as “sons of the camps.”

My Palestinian roots, combined with my professional background as an architect, have further fueled my interest in the field of refugee camps, which I approach from a perspective that integrates both human and material aspects. The spark that led me to embark on this research path dates back to 2016 when I obtained my master's degree in the post-professional UDH program (Urban Design & Housing) at the School of Architecture at McGill University. At that time, my research focused on the residential built environment in Jordan, exploring its implicit connotations and meanings. This exposure to the intersection of the tangible and intangible aspects of space piqued my interest in delving deeper into similar spaces—homes.

This interest aligned with regional unrest that resulted in the displacement of a massive number of refugees from Syria to Jordan, with over 600,000 settling in refugee camps and an additional million scattered throughout towns and cities. It was during this period that my passion to explore refugee camps solidified. Initially, I intended to study both Palestinian and Syrian refugee camps. However, due to unspecified reasons from governmental institutions, I was denied access to the Syrian camps. This event marked a turning point in my research journey, as I decided to solely focus on the Palestinian case. In retrospect, this was a positive change as it allowed me to

delve deeper into Palestinian camps and document the unheard narratives shared by the few remaining first-generation Palestinian refugees.

While refugee camps are often considered unhomely, my research journey has revealed that these marginalized spaces hold powerful interpretations of what home means. Through the application of the *assemblage* approach, my study has unraveled the factors and associations that contribute to the formation of a home within a refugee camp, revealing its contested nature. This has heightened my awareness of the tensions that arise between refugees and higher authorities, as well as the strategies employed by refugees to mitigate the impact of these tensions on the ground. It has also highlighted potential for collaboration between camp management professionals and the refugees who reside in these spaces.

This has prompted me to reflect on my position not only as a Palestinian by origin but also as a practitioner in the field of architecture and design. The process of conducting this research has particularly expanded my knowledge in the field of architecture, where material considerations often take precedence. However, through this research and my introduction to assemblage theory, I have come to realize that an accurate understanding of any space should extend beyond its materiality to also encompass the non-material.

Lastly, I view this work as a celebration of the Palestinian memory in exile and the many ways it materializes. It shares the testimonies, which would otherwise remain unheard, of those who fled their homes barefoot and faced the daunting task of starting over from scratch. Each page of this study serves as a testament that I believe my father and late mother, who were born in Palestine and instilled in me a deep attachment to the land, would be proud of.

1. Introduction

> "Exile is more than a geographical concept. You can be an exile in your homeland, in your own house, in a room." — (Darwish, 1973)

Mahmoud Darwish, the national poet of Palestine, asserts that exile transcends geographical boundaries and can be experienced even within the confines of one's own house in their homeland. Similarly, I would add that the notion of home extends beyond the physical realm and can be found outside of one's homeland. In fact, a sense of home can be established even in exile, and in the most unlikely of places, such as a refugee camp. This is not a matter of romanticizing refugee camps or celebrating their existence, but rather acknowledging the harsh realities occurring on the ground. Wars, persecution, and violence around the world lead to the continuous displacement of vast numbers of refugees to different countries, drawing attention to the consequences of these global issues (Chak, 2016). In this dissertation, I examine one of these consequences: the refugee camp.

In the last 30 years, scholars have studied refugee camps and similar marginalized spaces (such as concentration camps, asylums, and orphanages) with a special focus on the power structures that enable conditions of oppression and precarity. The notions of *state of exception* (Agamben, 1998), *abject spaces* (Isin & Rygiel, 2007) and other contemporary interpretations of the notion of *heterotopia* (Agier, 2012) are some examples of this type of inquiry. While acknowledging the insightful and critical contributions of these works in understanding how oppressive systems work, they often overlook the potential of the marginalized in these spaces (i.e., in this case, the refugees).

Such approaches, when applied to refugee camps, concentrate primarily on the entities involved in the planning, development and administration of camps. In this thesis, I focus on other significant factors that are crucial in shaping camp space, such as the physical and built environment, micro-economics and other similar and less visible manifestations of the agency of refugees. Planning authorities often perceive camps as completed entities and thus their temporal dimension and consequent transformative nature might be overlooked. This oversight hinders the recognition of the opportunity for evolution within the camp over time, leading to an understanding of these spaces, though not necessarily intentional, as static or bounded.

Viewing the camp as a cultural, social, and economic construct (Ramadan, 2013) allows for an understanding of the multiplicity of perspectives that the refugee camp entails. The perspective of the displaced (i.e., refugee) is often neglected or seen as highly constricted. Thus, I explore the role of the everyday lives of the displaced and their creative practices in resisting conditions of confinement in the camp. In doing so, I seek to explore perceptions beyond the idea that the refugee camps are static and hopelessly sealed spaces. In this pursuit, I interrogate three main theories and concepts that have been used to analyze marginalized spaces: (1) Agamben's *state of exception*[1] (1998) (2) Isin and Rygiel's *abject spaces* (2007) (3) Agier's *contemporary figures of heterotopias* (2012). I also draw from literature on *home-making* practices in refugee camps, examining the adaptation practices of refugees to alter the material and symbolic qualities of physical dwellings (or houses) to transform them into homes (Brun & Fábos, 2015; El Masri, 2020; Dudley, 2011). Finally, I employ the notion of *assembla*ge theory originally coined by Deleuze and Guattari (1987), which has been further developed by scholars in various disciplines. For instance, De Landa (2006) expands upon this concept in the field of philosophy, Dovey (2010) in

architecture, and Mcfarlane (2009) in geography. The theory emphasizes the ways in which various components or flows come together to form larger systems or entities. These components can include both human and non-human elements, such as technologies, organizations, ideas, and physical environments, stressing the dynamic and contingent nature of these *assemblages*. This shows how a given system is constantly evolving and changing based on interactions occurring among its components and flows (Dovey, 2010).

The equal attention that *assemblage* theory gives to its constitutive actors illustrates its bottom-up approach. Approaching the refugee camp as an *assemblage* formation helps to understand the camp as a dynamic and constantly evolving space, rather than a fixed entity. This approach also emphasizes the agency of refugees as key actors in shaping the development of the camp at various scales.

To frame the research, I center the following research questions: What kinds of *home-making* practices do refugees engage in within the refugee camp setting? What level of agency do refugees have in shaping, conceiving and imagining their own living spaces and what are the factors that influence this agency? And how are camps spatially and temporally constructed and how is this process shaped by exchanges, interactions and flows within and beyond their boundaries?

This thesis draws from ethnographic fieldwork based on interviews with key actors, direct observation and graphic journaling. In addition to that, I researched archival material that complemented the analysis of three Palestinian refugee camps in Jordan, namely Baqa’a, Al-Husn, and Talbiyeh.

1.1. Thesis Structure

My dissertation follows the manuscript style, which is a non-traditional type of dissertation that consists of three journal articles that form the main body of the thesis. However, they do not themselves constitute a thesis. Hence, they are framed by chapters at the beginning and the end and linked through presentation pages before each article that give the manuscripts the structure of a thesis. Nevertheless, each of these articles are narratively and thematically distinct and can function as stand-alone articles. Here, I describe the motivations behind this approach, the challenges that it poses, and the different ways this thesis can be read.

This type of thesis aligns with the criteria set by the School of Graduate Studies at the University of Concordia. There are several reasons behind my choice of the three-manuscript style over the traditional style. First, the three-manuscript style facilitates publication, as each manuscript can be submitted to academic journals as a stand-alone article. Second, each manuscript addresses a particular aspect of the research questions. Given that my research is interdisciplinary, spanning fields of architecture, geography, philosophy, and urban planning, adopting the three-manuscript style helps me present the work in a way that is accessible to different audiences (architects, planners, geographers, etc.).

In terms of the challenges that are associated with the use of three-manuscript style, compared to the traditional approach, I have identified the following difficulties throughout the research writing process: first, the need to ensure coherence and unity across the three manuscripts while also maintaining their independence as stand-alone articles; second, the necessity to connect the manuscripts through a comprehensive introduction, conclusion, and framing throughout the

manuscript, ensuring that the research presented in each manuscript adds to the overall thesis; third, the challenge of being able to elaborate and provide more in-depth ethnographic narratives within the three-manuscript model, compared to the traditional style. An ethnography, typically relies in long interview quotes and fieldnotes. The objective of this is to convey the complexity of the lives of key actors. While this is possible in the compiled volume presented here, each of the articles, as individual pieces that will be submitted to journals, lack enough space to show the full picture to the reader. Finally, the possibility of content overlap or repetition across the three manuscripts. For instance, each of the three manuscripts includes detailed literature reviews that are specific to the theoretical concepts and methods used in each paper. However, it is important to note that, in the introduction chapter, I present a comprehensive literature review of the three main bodies of literature that cut across the three manuscripts, namely refugee camps, *home-making,* and *assemblage* theory. Therefore, there is some overlap and intersection between the comprehensive literature review and the literature reviews for each individual manuscript.

What distinguishes the manuscript- style dissertation from the traditional one is the different ways of reading it offers. Readers may choose to read each manuscript separately, independent of the other articles. Through this way, readers can concentrate on a specific aspect of the research argument, allowing them to gain in-depth analysis that matches their interest. Alternatively, readers can read the whole dissertation as one cohesive unit, enabling them to examine the dissertations' overarching theme and the connections between the manuscripts.

In this thesis, I pose three main research questions, each addressed across the three articles. However, each article focuses primarily on one specific aspect of the research argument, in the form of journal articles that I intend to submit to publications such as the *Journal of Urban Science* and *Anthropology Today*. Each article centers on one of the following aspects of the study, respectively: the evolution of the camp, housing settlements, and sustainable livelihood practices of refugees.

In Chapter 1, I provide a concise overview of the historical context of refugee crises, both globally and locally, in Jordan. Next, I present a comprehensive literature review and introduce my theoretical frameworks and research hypothesis. To conclude the chapter, I provide a detailed description of the research methodology.

Chapter 2 presents the context for the study before delving into the three manuscripts. Here, I trace the evolution of the policy and policy-making processes of the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA) through data, mainly, collected from archival research, interviews, and UNRWA annual reports. I conclude this chapter by identifying the shift in the role of UNRWA as a humanitarian institution responsible for the Palestinian refugee camps regionally over time. Methods I use here include analysis of published and unpublished documents from the archives of UNRWA and interviews with refugees, representatives of UNRWA and the Department of Palestinian Affairs (DPA).

In Chapter 3, I present the first manuscript, in which I address the research questions at the scale of the camp and provide a detailed assessment of the evolution of the three case studies. I show how the same policy can produce different morphological outcomes for each case study. In this

manuscript, I draw upon literature on policy mobility and refugee camps to provide an instructive lens for understanding the diverse forms of camp evolution and development. My aim during this analysis is to shed light on how refugees have contributed to the historical development of the camps' boundaries and layout. I recognize this as a manifestation of their *home-making* process at the camp level, and I aim to uncover its intersections with the policy-making processes of the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA). This manuscript primarily focuses on qualitative analysis of maps and statistical data, utilizing infographics, maps and other graphics to express this data, in addition to the aforementioned direct observation, interviews, and graphic journaling.

Chapter 4 presents the second manuscript, in which I explore another aspect of refugees' *home-making* practices: the material and symbolic features of refugees' housing settlements in the camp. Through empirical data gathered from refugees' accounts, I aim to highlight the ways in which their agency is expressed through their dwellings. In this manuscript, I review literature on *home-making* in refugee camps and draw upon previous studies that emphasize the agency of refugees (Ramadan, 2013; Abourahme, 2015). By doing so, I analyze how these practices contribute to transforming the unfamiliar and new camp environment into a familiar space, through the refugees' *home-making* practices understood through the lens of *assemblage*. I also analyze the role of power dynamics and socio-spatial inequalities in shaping the agency of refugees in their pursuit of *home-making* practices. The chapter adopts a methodology that combines both archival and empirical research. By conducting ethnographic fieldwork, I integrate interviews with key actors (i.e., refugees, UNRWA and DPA members), direct observation, and field notes.

Chapter 5 presents the third manuscript. In this manuscript, I recognize refugees' *home-making* practices (particularly, dwelling adaptations and home economics), which secure and sustain their livelihoods, as environmentally sustainable processes. In this chapter, I examine literature that discusses resource challenges that arise in long-standing refugee camps and the ways they are addressed by refugees. Subsequently, I delve into existing literature on sustainability, both in a broad sense and within the context of refugee camps. The theoretical framework employed in this chapter incorporates the concept of *Environmentalism of the Poor* (EOP) (Guha, 2002; Nixon, 2011), along with *assemblage* theory (Deleuze & Guattari, 1987). EOP examines how the poor tend to adopt more sustainable practices out of necessity, as a means of struggling to survive. *Assemblage* theory, in turn, helps understand refugees' survival *home-making* practices as environmentally sustainable *assemblages*. I adopt a bottom-up perspective to explore the topic of sustainability and emphasize the influence of politics in shaping the framework of refugees' sustainable *home-making* practices. In this chapter, I use direct observation and interviews with refugees and planning officials.

Chapter 6 presents both a discussion and conclusion following the three manuscripts and provides a comprehensive overview of the research and its implications. I aim to provide a synthesis of the key findings from each manuscript, provide an overall analysis and interpretation of these findings, and highlight their significance to the broader field of study. Additionally, I seek to identify areas for future research and provide recommendations for practical applications of the research findings.

1.2. Context: Refugees & Refugee Camps

Expulsion, displacement, diaspora, and persecution are inextricably linked to geographies of asylum and refuge. Throughout history, displacement has occurred due to slave trade, breakup of empires, and ethnic cleansing, among other reasons (Peteet, 2005). The twentieth century was identified by Loescher (1993) as the "century of the refugee" (p. 148), highlighting the enormous number of worldwide displacement that took place during this era. The increase in rate and scale of displacement during the 20th century is attributed to the use of advanced technologies in modern wars (Peteet, 2005). By the end of the second world war, international aid regimes emerged as regulatory bodies and agencies managing millions of displaced populations (Furia, 2015). These agencies, in addition to their humanitarian practices, were seen as means through which economic and geopolitical power relations were maintained (Furia, 2015). The office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) was established in 1950 in the wake of the Second World War. The 1951 United Nations Convention on the status of refugees defines a refugee as an individual who,

> "Owing to a well-founded fear of being persecuted for reason of race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social group or political opinion and that such a person is outside the country of his nationality and is unable or owing to such fear, unwilling to avail himself of the protection of the country".

At the beginning of the twenty-first century, there were 13,000,000 refugees worldwide (Peteet, 2005). One of the missions of the international aid regime was to create shelters or refugee camps to rapidly accommodate refugees following displacement. According to the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), refugee camps are:

> "Temporary facilities built to provide immediate protection and assistance to people who have been forced to flee their homes due to war, persecution or violence. While camps are not established to provide permanent solutions, they offer a safe haven for refugees

> and meet their most basic needs such as food, water, shelter, medical treatment and other basic services during emergencies."

Refugee camps mark "physically and symbolically the transition of human beings between societies" (Mortland, 1987, p.375). According to Bender (2021), most refugee camps are located in the Global South. For instance, Turkey hosts more refugees than all the countries of the European Union. However, in the Global North, restrictive security laws of liberal democracies limit refugees' access to these countries and contribute to the prolonged stay of refugees in the Global South (Bender, 2021).

Palestinian refugees represent one of the largest groups of refugees globally (Peteet, 2005) at the turn of the 21st century. The subject of Palestinian refugees and their living spaces has been the focus of many existing studies (Allan, 2013; Ramadan, 2013; Feldman, 2018). However, the situation of Palestinian refugees has been referred to as a:

> "complex humanitarian situation, in which Palestinian refugees are the world's only exception to the international protection regime (United Higher Commissioner for Refugees- UNHCR) and are therefore some of the most vulnerable displaced groups in the world " (El Masri, 2020, p.2).

The exceptional status of Palestinian refugees is owed to their existence prior to the 1951 United Nations Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees, thus situating them outside the protection regime established by this treaty. Given that, the complexity of Palestinian displacement relates, in part, to the tensions instilled within it, for example the *right to rights* vs. the *right to return* (Salih, 2020). The concept of *Tawtin* (naturalization) or the right to citizenship for refugees in a host country, has often been viewed critically by both, Palestinian leaders and host countries themselves, as it is seen as incompatible with the right to return to Palestine (Salih, 2020). Fully

integrating refugees in the host state can be seen as a process of assimilation and therefore a gradual erasure of refugees' identity as Palestinians who have the right to return to their homeland. For this reason, most host countries deny Palestinian refugees access to citizenship, with the sole exception of Jordan, where most refugees are granted full access to citizenship due to Jordan’s annexation of the West Bank in 1950. This annexation placed all Palestinians living in the West and East Bank under the administration of Jordan, consequently granting them full citizenship. Therefore, I chose Jordan as the fieldwork site, as it reflects its fluidity and multiple possibilities Palestinian refugee camp can demonstrate. The following section presents background information on Jordan, situating the fieldwork within the broader regional context.

1.2.1. Research Context: Jordan and Refugee Camps

Jordan is a country in the Middle East. It covers an area of 89,342 square kilometers and has a population of around 10 million (Jordanian Department of Statistics, 2020). Jordan shares boundaries with Palestine to the west, Iraq to the east, Saudi Arabia to the east and south and Syria to the north (Jordanian Department of Statistics, 2020). Jordan has been seen by fleeing refugees from neighboring countries (i.e., Palestine, Syria) as a safe haven amidst the chaos of war. There are two main reasons that drove me to choose Jordan as the research site. Firstly, Jordan has been a distinct case among neighboring countries (i.e., Lebanon, Syria) in terms of the rights it gives to most of the Palestinian refugees on its land (the right to citizenship). Secondly, the prolonged history of Jordan in hosting refugee camps from various neighboring countries has provided substantial opportunities to study refugee camps and the different associations these spaces reflect. The emergence of refugee camps in Jordan dates back to the early 1950s, which

were established to accommodate Palestinians fleeing their country in the aftermath of the Arab Israeli war (Tawil, 2009). Following the Palestinian refugees, Iraqi and Syrian refugees also had their place in Jordan in 2003 and 2011 respectively.

Refugee camps in Jordan are not uniform, instead varying from case to case, reflecting distinct examples based on factors such as geographical location, political context, duration of displacement, and the effectiveness of humanitarian response associated with each specific situation. As such, when discussing a refugee camp, I am referring not only to its physical space, but also to the context, government, humanitarian agencies, history, and international relations that are associated with it. In this study, I focus on three Palestinian refugee camps (Baqa'a, Al-Husn, and Talbiyeh) camps. In the following section, I will delve into the Palestinian refugee camps in Jordan.

Although Palestinian refugee camps in Jordan are described by UNRWA as temporary shelters, the on-the-ground reality suggests they are closer to permanent settlements. There are thirteen Palestinian refugee camps in Jordan, ten of which are official. The ten official camps were set up by The United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA) in the aftermath of the Arab-Israeli conflict between 1948 and 1967 (UNRWA, 2019) and administered jointly with the Jordanian government (Valentine, 2012). The three unofficial camps are administered solely by the Jordanian government (Valentine, 2012). As of 2012, Jordan was home to 1.4 million of the world's 5 million registered Palestinian refugees (UNRWA CIP Guidelines, 2012, p.6). According to UNRWA's 2019 annual report, that number had risen to

2,034,641. The population of Jordan consists of 55-70% Jordanians of Palestinian origin (Valentine, 2012).

Two years before the establishment of UNRWA in 1950, refugees were located in areas rented by the Jordanian government from local landowners across the country. They were provided with tents and water by the government and international aid organizations (UNRWA CIP Guidelines, 2012). Once UNRWA was established, the responsibility of aiding refugees was shifted to them, thus beginning the gradual evolution of Palestinian refugee camps from emergency shelters to permanent settlements alongside an evolution of the role of UNRWA as an institution.

1.3. Literature Review

This section begins with a historical overview that traces the early stages of city-making and its connection to the logic of camps. Throughout this literature review, I highlight influential works on marginalized spaces that focus on the powerful entities in charge of these spaces. Such perspectives often underestimate the agency of a diverse range of actors in the processes of space development and governance. I explore the following concepts in the literature: *State of exception* (Agamben, 1998), *contemporary figures of heterotopias* (2012); and *abject spaces* (Isin & Rygiel, 2007). Often focusing on the marginal dimension of refugee camps, these lenses of analysis overlook the potential for transformation and agency (however minimal) on the side of the refugees. In order to think beyond the oppressive nature of the camp, I subsequently engage with literature that seeks to explore the potential agency of camp dwellers for bottom-up transformation (Feigis, 2010; Sanyal, 2011; Ramadan, 2013; Abourahme, 2015; El-Masri, 2020). This offers an understanding of the camp as fluid space (Ramadan, 2013; Abourahme, 2015). This

approach is based on the *assemblage* theory proposed by Deleuze & Guattari (1987). In the following section, I introduce literature on *assemblage* theory (Deleuze & Guattari, 1967) and its links to different spatial concepts such as boundaries, territorialization, deterritorialization and the ontology of becoming (De Landa, 2006; Dovey, 2009; McFarlane, 2011; McFarlane & Farias, 2011; Farias & Bender, 2012; Purcell, 2013; Massey, 1992, 1993; Dovey, 2009; De la Llata, 2016, 2021). This section concludes with a literature review on home and *home-making* in refugee camps (Fiddian-Qasmiyeh, 2013; Brun & Fabos, 2015; Omata, 2016; El Masri, 2020; Ramadan, 2013), highlighting *home-making* as an expression of refugees' agency.

1.3.1. Marginalized Spaces- Refugee Camps

The Camp & the City

The associations raised in literature between the domain of cities and camps aim to understand the camp through the lens of the city (Dalal, 2014). For example, scholars have referred to the camps as a *state of exception* to the city, a *counter-city*, an *accidental city*, and even as *camp-cities* (Agamben, 1998; Malkki, 2002; Jansen, 2011; Agier, 2002).

For Giorgio Agamben (1998), the only way of understanding the logic of camps is by relating it to the historical concept of cities. Diken and Laustsen (2006) have traced the history of cities through distinguishing between the inner and the outer, in other words, what is inside and what is outside of a city. They explain how historically a city has been defined by a borderline (or a wall) that distinguishes between the civilized, inside, and the uncivilized, on its outside.

Diken & Laustsen (2006) have elaborated on the "City Myth" through the story of the founding of Rome by the mythological twins "Romulus and Remus" who were said to have established

the city by fencing it off with walls. The story tells how Romulus was killed by his brother Remus, after he jumped over (or transgressed) the wall, mocking its low height. According to Diken & Laustsen (2006), this myth elucidates the similarities between cities and camps. The "wall," which exemplifies the "law," draws the in-out borderline, defining what comes beyond the line as an enemy and what comes within it as a "friend" (Diken & Laustsen, 2006, p. 446). Similarly, Schmitt argues that territorialization, which refers to defining cities or territories by walls, was the beginning of establishing an urban area or a society, assuming that walls were the city's starting point (Diken & Laustsen, 2006). Schmitt uses German linguist Jost Trier's quote "In the beginning there was the fence" (Schmitt, 2003, p. 74), to argue that the act of fencing off land and taking possession of it is what establishes society's order and direction (Schmitt, 2003, p. 80). For Schmitt, the source of culture and law can be attributed not to language, which connects people, but to the fence that divides them.

Diken & Laustsen challenge Schmitt's claims regarding the early stages of city foundation, instead stressing that walls or fences cannot mark the beginning of a society or a city, as this minimizes the role of the nomadic tribes to merely a "pre-social and prehistoric phenomena" (Diken and Laustsen, 2006., p. 444). Diken and Laustsen (2006) consider Schmitt's failure to recognize these mobile or unsettled factors as amounting to "spatial racism" (p. 444). Michelet's well-known quote "from asylum the city is born" (1831) follows Diken & Laustsen's conceptualization, as it describes the origins of cities as mostly organic and not necessarily demarcated by walls or visible borders. In fact, it recognizes how order can be generated from disorder and formality from informality. Likewise, Michel Agier (2002) states that "camps are embryos of cities" (p. 323). Sanyal claims that camps mirror characteristics and features of urban life found in cities:

> "Camps are thought of as mimetic spaces that appropriate city characteristics to become camp-villes or city-camps, where a unique form of enduring organization of space, social life and system of power is created" (Sanyal, 2011, p. 879).

Agier (2002) views refugee camps and cities as not mutually exclusive or opposing each other in a binary manner, with one term denoting the formal and the other the informal. Instead, there is a certain degree of ambiguity between the two concepts (Dalal, 2014). The interdependence of refugee camps and cities has given rise to the term *camp-cities*, which reflects the intertwined nature of the two concepts (Agier, 2002; Sanyal, 2010; Dalal, 2014). Due to this, the question of how the camp has been articulated in influential literature is particularly relevant and is the focus of the following section.

Agamben's State of Exception

Agamben's *state of exception* (1998) is one famous view that conceptualizes a camp as an abstract space excluded from the normal classification and definitions of physical ordinary structures; where regular laws are suspended, and exceptional laws become the permanent rules (Owens, 2009). In this section, I explain Agamben's perspective on what constitutes a camp, and why he considers them to be a *state of exception*. Additionally, I explore some of the key concepts associated with this view, such as *bare life*, *zone of indistinction*, and *sovereign power.*

Giorgio Agamben's *state of exception* (1998) explores the titular concept, which refers to a situation where the state suspends the law and basic civil rights in response to an emergency that poses a threat to public security. In the context of refugee camps, the *state of exception* informs Agamben's conceptualization of these spaces. Agamben's ideas are often applied to critique the legal and political status of refugees who are placed in these camps. Agamben argues

that the *state of exception* creates a category of *bare life, naked life, or homo sacer,* in which individuals are stripped of their rights and reduced to mere biological existence (Owens, 2009). Agamben (1998) distinguishes between two distinct forms of life: *zoe* and *bios*, which correspond to biological life and socio-political life, respectively. *Zoe* pertains to the biological existence of an individual, encompassing the private realm of home where political intervention is not allowed (Downey, 2009). Within this realm, regular practices necessary for sustaining life (reproduction) are often carried out by slaves or women (Owens, 2009). Conversely, *bios* signifies the realm of political life, where individuals engage in political activities within the public sphere (Owens, 2009). In the ancient city-state, *Bios* was traditionally attributed to free men or citizens, as they were able to participate in political debates and affairs (Owens, 2009).

From this perspective, Agamben claims that the human figure, or the refugee in this context, is reduced in value to the level of animals with no political freedom (*zoe)*, rendering the refugee passive and rightless (Owens, 2009). Indeed, refugees often face significant restrictions on their freedom of movement and basic human rights while living in camps.

Agamben believes a camp, existing in a *state of exception,* to be the best example of re-including the human being (*zoe*) as an animal into the political realm *(bios)*, where the distinction between *zoe* and *bios* is blurred. This in turn means that, in the camp, there is no distinction between nature and politics, private and public, and citizen and non-citizen, rendering the camps as a *zone of indistinction* (Agamben, 1998).

Agamben uses the term *homo sacer* to refer to refugees in a *state of exception;* that is, when a person is placed in a camp, they are stripped of their citizenship and political rights. This act

transforms a person with full rights into a *homo sacer*. In ancient Rome, *homo sacer* is a person who is expelled from political life (bios), or a person who can be killed but not sacrificed in any religious way. Refugees are reduced to a status where they are considered unworthy of being offered as a sacrifice (Mouris-Hanna,2021). Here the discussion of the religious sacrifice is a metaphorical representation of refugees' precarious existence in the camp and the erosion of their legal status. It underscores the dehumanizing aspects of their lives in the camp, highlighting the parallels between their lived experiences and Agamben's concept of *bare life* under the *state of exception*. Downey (2009) provides a comprehensive explanation of this concept:

> "the sacred man who can be killed by anyone (he has no rights) but not sacrificed because the act of sacrifice is only representable within the legal context of the city – the very city from which homo sacer has been banished" (p. 111)

Downey (2009) defines sovereignty or sovereign power—the arbiter of a *state of exception*—as follows:

> "Sovereignty is not to be necessarily equated here solely with historical ideals of monarchical power (although that is where the model for modern versions of sovereign power originates); rather, the sovereign is he who decides when the rule of law is suspended." (p.110)

In other words, sovereign power refers to the ultimate authority or the highest form of power within a given political system (Agamben, 1998). When the sovereign power initiates a *state of exception*, politics turns into bio-politics and the human being into *homo sacer* (Agamben, 1998). Biopolitics refers to the control exerted by sovereign power over the life and death of the subject:

> "the modern subject is increasingly subjected to a sovereign power over his life and death; 'not simple natural life, but life exposed to death (bare life or sacred life) is the originary political element'" (Downey, 2009, p. 112)

The *state of exception* occurs when the sovereign power operates outside the law, requiring an opening in the system to function without legal consequences (Diken, 2004). Thus, it suspends the law and acts without constraint (Diken, 2004). Agamben further explains the logic of the *state of exception* as follows:

> “The exception does not subtract itself from the rule; rather, the rule, suspending itself, gives rise to the exception. The particular ‘force’ of law consists in this capacity of law to maintain itself in relation to an exteriority (Agamben, 1998, p.18)

Agamben links the logic of camps to the concept of the nation-state (Owens, 2009) by presenting the juridico-political structure of the camp as a physical translation of the political space of modern society (Agamben, 1998). According to Agamben’s view of our modern nation-state, the existence of camps coincides with the emergence of citizenship laws. When modern nations took the responsibility of regulating the biological beings within it, the concept of camps came to exist (Owens, 2009). It is noteworthy to mention that the foundation of the nation-state is built on the trinity of territory, order and birth (Owens, 2009). That is, nation-state establishes its sovereignty based on concepts of birth that entails nationality or citizenship. However, the presence of refugees in a nation-state unsettles the traditional understanding of sovereignty, which relies on a clear distinction between citizens and non-citizens based on birth and nationality. Refugees unsettles this framework by existing in a state of liminality, where they are subject to specific legal regulations and protections. However, they are excluded from the full rights and privileges of citizenship.

In summary, the sovereign state in ancient civil society was established on the basis of excluding *zoe* (biological being) and distinguishing it from *bios* (political life). In modern politics, *zoe o*r

biological life is placed at the center of politics or by re-including it in political life (*bios*) (Ek, 2006). That is, the sovereignty of the state is premised on the concept of *bare life,* where the state (sovereign power) offers protection to its people in exchange for, or submission of, their bare life (Owens, 2009).

Contemporary Figures of Heterotopias

Michel Agier (2012) builds on the Foucauldian concept of *heterotopian* spaces (2008) in understanding refugee camps. Heterotopia refers to “other,” or parallel, spaces that make real utopian spaces possible outside their boundaries through keeping undesirable bodies within their confines, for example in a jail. A camp represents a modern example of *heterotopian* space that is seen as an abnormal or “undesirable” segment of society. A conception of the refugee camp as a *heterotopian* space where undesirable populations are kept and controlled aligns with Agier’s (2012) conception of the ghetto. Agier (2012) introduces an alternative perspective that questions the conventional understanding of the ghetto. While previous literature has often examined the term from an ethnic or religious standpoint (Flint, 2009; Wahid, 2019; Bryant & Hatay, 2011), Agier (2012) adopts a non-hierarchical approach, exploring the ghetto in terms of its connection to the city and its separation from the state.

In Agier's (2012) research, he extensively examines different camp locations, including in Palestine and Turkey, to gain a comprehensive understanding of the unique characteristics that distinguish camps from their surrounding urban environments. The findings shed light on the complex dynamics of these spaces, revealing how individuals in camps often experience segregation and are positioned at a physical and symbolic distance from the state and its

governance (Ζήση, 2021). Agier (2012) draws connections between camps and ghettos, considering them as closely interconnected. They share common characteristics of being distanced from the state and intimately linked to the refugee experience. Both camps and ghettos form integral components of a broader global network of marginalized areas, where individuals face various forms of exclusion and vulnerability.

For example, Agier (2012) sheds light on Kula Camp, a case involving Liberian immigrants in Kailahun. In this instance, Agier (2012) explores the factors contributing to the creation of ghettos within the camp context, such as the regulatory practices of the host government and aid organizations, as well as the camp's spatial layout (i.e., grid pattern, fenced with barbed wire). As a result, the camp becomes segregated from the rest of the city, imposing restrictions on residents' freedom of mobility. Agier (2012) suggests that the host state's intention is to maintain a distance from these abnormal spaces, relegating them to the periphery of the city, similar to favelas.

In terms of camp evolution, Agier (2012) focuses on the role of the state's policies in shaping how camps are defined and how they evolve. This is not to say that Agier (2012) views the camp dwellers as passive, however the use of certain terms, such as ghettos and undesirables might risk perpetuating negative stereotypes that undermine refugees' capacities. More precisely, while acknowledging the political realities surrounding refugees and engaging in meaningful discussions about how states handle their situations are undoubtedly crucial, it is equally vital to approach this topic with language that upholds refugees' dignity, acknowledges their autonomy, and emphasizes their potential. According to Demoor (2014), the term "ghetto" carries negative implications when applied to the process of ghettoization of refugees. This can exacerbate the

suffering of refugees by fostering increased discrimination against them, as the word itself may evoke prejudiced attitudes. For Agier (2021), refugees are: "excluded from the native places they lost through displacement" (Agier, 2012, p. 278). According to Demoor (2014), Agier's analysis is too general and misses the specific experiences of different groups of the displaced (i.e., internally displaced refugees), homogenizing their experiences.

Abject Spaces

Building on Agamben's work, Isin and Rygiel (2007) present the idea of *abject spaces*, arguing that Agamben's *state of exception* does not take into account contemporary configurations of marginalized spaces, such as frontiers, special economic zones, and new forms of camps (i.e., detention camps). *Abject spaces* refer to "camps as states of inexistence that function as reserves in which subjects and their rights are suspended temporarily, in transition from one subjecthood to another" (Isin & Rygiel, 2007, p. 196). In their work, Isin & Rygiel (2007) describe *abject spaces* as being stigmatized or neglected, and perceived as unworthy of attention. These spaces are often in urban areas and are usually related to marginalized groups such as migrants, refugees, homeless people, or minorities. Through their analysis of the spatial and social dynamics of the modern-day refugee camp, Isin and Rygiel (2007) demonstrate the ways in which this space is both a physical and symbolic representation of marginalization and inequality.

Within abject spaces, a process of geographic and social isolation takes place. This is achieved through the sovereign state's silencing strategies, as will be explained later, where such spaces are referred to as "extraterritorial spaces" kept away from the state's territories (Isin & Rygiel,

2007, p. 181). In these spaces, the basic rights and freedoms of its inhabitants are restricted (Isin & Rygiel, 2007)

Such process results in the creation of distinct spatial hierarchy that serves as a physical and symbolic boundary, separating those residing inside the camps from those outside, reinforcing the idea of the camp as a space of isolation and confinement

Isin and Rygiel (2007) argue that refugees in these spaces are neither subject nor object but rather invisible, stripped of both potential and existing citizenship.

Refugees in *abject spaces* are not simply passive victims, as depicted in Agamben's state of exception, but are political actors who engage in various forms of resistance practices. According to Isin and Rygiel (2007), refugees' resistance practices can take many different forms, such as protests, hunger strikes, sit-ins, and other forms of direct action. According to Isin & Rygiel (2007), refugees are deemed rightless. Nevertheless, they engage in political action, such as hunger strikes, in their pursuit of rights (Isin & Rygiel, 2007). That is to say, the sovereign power in host nations have followed silencing strategies towards refugees through depriving them of having the right to rights (i.e., citizenship). However, refugees are able to utilize the same silencing strategy to their advantage. Isin & Rygiel (2007) mention an example of an Iranian refugee who sutured his lips and eyelids, taking a stand against Dutch asylum laws. In this example, the refugee used his own body (*bare life*) as the means through which political resistance is expressed. Through suturing his lips and eyelids, the refugee represented how the sovereign's silencing strategy denied his subjectivity and basic human rights. In sum, while it is true that refugees in this example demonstrate a potential for agency, their actions serve to illustrate their confinement rather than their capacity to reshape the camp spaces.

These approaches highlight systems of oppression and the ultimate powerlessness of the camp and its dwellers. It primarily focuses on power dynamics within these spaces, disregarding the agency of a multitude of actors that contribute to the development and evolution of camps. Thereby, it provides limited insights into the active involvement of refugees in shaping the development of the camp space, often overlooking or marginalizing their role. In the following section, I review literature that reclaims the agency of refugees, highlighting their role in shaping camp space.

Reclaiming refugee agency

Certain scholars endeavor to reclaim and emphasize the agency of camp dwellers (Feigis, 2010; Sanyal, 2011; Ramadan, 2013; Abourahme, 2015; El Masri, 2020). These perspectives strive to transcend literature that portrays refugees as passive and voiceless, instead acknowledging and affirming their agency.

The agency of refugees as defined by Dalal et al. (2018), refers to the counter-strategies that refugees carry out to resist the system of control imposed on them by higher authorities. Refugees' counter-strategies do not have to be intentional, major practices (Feigis, 2010). In contrast, they are usually "minor" gradual acts (Feigis, 2010, p. 427) that turn "impossibility" (p. 425) in the camp into a tool through which creativity is expressed by refugees. Refugee agency is often manifested through these counter-strategies in the form of *home-making* practices, which are explored in depth in the following section.

1.3.2. *Home-making* in refugee camps

Reviewing literature on the topic of *home-making* in refugee camps reveals the complex and multi-dimensional nature of the concept of home and *home-making* (Fiddian-Qasmiyeh, 2013; Brun & Fabos; 2015; Elmasri, 2020). Refugees enduring prolonged displacement circumstances employ adaptive measures and unique approaches in a camp setting through their *home-making* practices (Safro-Mensah, 2009; Dudley, 2011, Nde et al., 2020). Before delving into the aspects of *home-making* in further detail, I consider some of the literature that grapples with what constitutes a *home* in a refugee camp.

In recent years, scholars have shown a growing interest in exploring the concept of home within camp settings (Brun & Fábos, 2015; El Masri, 2020; Dudley, 2011). Their analyses highlight the diverse ways in which home is understood and defined in exile. In her work, El Masri (2020) makes a significant contribution to the conceptualization of "home" in the context of refugee camps. She initiates her analysis by emphasizing the role of one's perspective in shaping the understanding of home within camp environments. Drawing on her own experiences as a Palestinian refugee in Lebanon and as a researcher, El Masri provides an ethnographic and auto-ethnographic study of the camp where she spent her formative years. This dual perspective lends a unique and insightful lens to her examination of the notion of home in camp spaces. Her theoretical framework is derived from Brun & Fábos (2015) and conceptualizes the home as both an idea and practice that can be categorized into three types: *home as* daily *home-making* practices, *Home* as a set of memories and belonging, and HOME *as* the geopolitics of homeland. This framework challenges the rigid definition of *home* as merely a physical dwelling.

It is important to distinguish a house from a home and clarify that what turns a house into a home are the multi-layered practices of home-making. El Masri (2020) defines refugees' home-making practices as coping tactics for "chronic uncertainty" (p. 6) beyond the limitations of humanitarian agencies and the host state. Refugees' home-making describes all interactions between refugees and the physical attributes of the camp (walls, streets, homes, etc.). El Masri elaborates using an example from Palestinian camps in Lebanon, where refugees claimed to reproduce Palestine in exile through home-making practices such as naming neighborhoods after Palestinian cities. These studies emphasize and acknowledge the active role of refugees in shaping their new living environment and striving to establish a sense of belonging within the camp. By doing so, they not only surpass the limitations of portraying refugees as lacking empowerment and agency over their living space, but also help in understanding the notion of home in the context of a camp by highlighting the distinction between a physical dwelling and the multi-layered practices that transform it into a home.

Refugees often demonstrate remarkable initiative in their efforts to establish a sense of belonging in their new surroundings, despite the obstacles they face. Studies have shown that *home-making* practices, as a form of agency, encompasses a wide range of manifestations. These include the replication of cultural traditions and artifacts, the establishment of connections with fellow community members from their home country, and the adaptation of physical features and layouts of their homes (Agier, 2010; Gallie, 1997).

An example that exemplifies refugees' agency is observed in their *home-making* practices within refugee camps in Gaza. Despite the Israeli government's attempts to tighten control over these camps by imposing regulations that restrict construction, refugees have demonstrated their

resourcefulness by creatively finding ways to circumvent these regulations and adapt them to their own needs (Feigis, 2010). More particularly, refugees in Gaza would compensate for the lack of construction material allowed by using rubble collected from buildings demolished by Israel (Feigis, 2010). The innovative spatial practices followed by refugees that enabled them to turn the camp into a space of self-determination are referred to as “minor architecture” (Feigis, 2010, p. 427), while the refugees were described as the real “masters of the space” (Feigis, 2010, p. 429).

Several studies that reclaim the agency of refugees utilize a dynamic perspective in understanding the refugee camp (Ramadan, 2013; Abourahme, 2015). Ramadan (2013) views the camp as an “assemblage of people, institutions, organizations, the built environment and the relations between them that produce particular values and practices” (p.65) and criticizes work that separates geopolitics from refugees’ everyday lives. Ramadan (2013) presents refugees’ everyday practices as a manifestation of geopolitics, treating each as equivalent rather than placing them in a hierarchical relationship. Ramadan (2013) describes refugees' practices, such as participating in decision-making processes, advocating for their rights, and resisting imposed constraints as demonstrations of their political agency and capacity to shape living conditions within camps. This concept contrasts Agamben’s approach that undermines refugee agency and refers to their situation as *bare life* (1998). Similarly, Abourahme (2015) criticizes how some literature places refugee agency in a binary relation with the structure of the camp. When this Juridico-political approach is applied to Palestinian camps, it entrenches the divide between the material-lived and the symbolic-political aspects of the camp. Abourahme calls “to move beyond this paradigmatic frame” (p. 200) and instead look at the camp as a material *assemblage* that

brings refugees' everyday life, material and symbolic aspects, along with all other parts making up the camp space "into mutually constitutive relations'' (p. 200).

To provide a more comprehensive exploration of *assemblage* theory, the following section tackles influential literature on the subject of *assemblage*.

1.3.3. Literature on *assemblage* theory

Ramadan (2013) and Abourahme (2015) both adopt an *assemblage* theory approach, initially developed by Deleuze & Guattari (1978). The *assemblage* theory is defined as "[t]he process by which a collective entity (thing or meaning) is created from the connection of a range of heterogeneous components" (Bingham 2009, p. 38). There is a significant body of literature exploring *assemblage* theory, including works by De Landa, (2006), Dovey, (2010), McFarlane (2011). McFarlane (2011, p. 571) argues that "*assemblage* is not simply a spatial category, output, or resultant formation, but signifies doing, performance, and events," clarifying that fluidity distinguishes the *assemblage* approach from other approaches to refugee camps.

Thus, *assemblage* reads any system as composed of heterogeneous components that could be human, non-human, material, nonmaterial and flows. These component parts can be plugged into or detached from any given *assemblage*, and then enter a different *assemblage*, constructing new relations and interactions (McFarlane, 2011). The relations between these components are described as relations of exteriority (McFarlane, 2011), in which the components do not meld in the *assemblage*, which, in turn, maintain the components' autonomy (De Landa, 2006). Based on these relations of exteriority, the properties of an *assemblage* formation do not represent the sum of the properties of the parts of an entity (McFarlane, 2011). When these parts come

together to form an *assemblage*, they retain their individual characteristics, enabling them to detach and become part of new *assemblages*. The concept of *assemblage* emphasizes the process of arranging components and elements rather than merging them into one seamless whole (McFarlane, 2011). *Assemblage* is about emergence and continuous change; thus, it counters the approach of essentialism, representing a state of becoming and ever-lasting change (De Landa, 2006). In the following section, I provide a brief review of ontologies of space, clarifying how these concepts can contribute to our understanding of the nature of space.

Ontologies of space

Different approaches throughout history have sought to understand the nature of space. According to Purcell (2013), there have been two main perspectives addressing space ontology that have emerged from philosophical interpretation of the world's essence. First, a more rigid perspective has viewed space as a monolithic product or as a being or object (Purcell, 2013). A second, more fluid conception reads a space as *becoming* or as an ongoing process that is exposed to change continuously (Purcell, 2013; De la Llata, 2016, 2021).

The ontology of being is an approach that looks at the essence of the world as if made of entities or objects that have agency or subjectivities according to the Kantian approach. Dovey (2009) contends that, in a Kantian approach, space is a component that exists in our realm, even though it is intangible. It is structured and imagined in our mind based on our experiences. For the essentialists, a place is fixed and has a firm essence and features embedded in a specific context. A Heideggerian approach adopting the ontology of being views a place as a mere location or a

site (Dovey, 2009). Such an approach misses the meanings and every-day experiences accompanying a place, which relate to the *becoming* nature of space (Dovey, 2009).

The approach of *becoming,* adopted by several thinkers (Massey, 1992, 1993; Deleuze & Guattari, 1968; Dovey, 2009, Purcell, 2013, De la Llata, 2021, Hillier, 2017a, 2017b), embraces a dynamic conception of space, strongly rejecting the enclosed, fixed and bounded view of space of the essentialists. This (*becoming*) approach links the process of creating new meanings and lived experiences to the continuous process of producing and reproducing space. Theories of *assemblage* and *becoming* are more about the connections and networks that keep a space in an unstoppable process of transformation (Dovey, 2009, De la Llata, 2021). Massey is known to robustly criticize Heideggerian notions of space, describing it as backward (Dovey, 2009). For Massey (1993), since a space is socially constructed, it cannot be fixed in boundaries or singular in identity. This argument is, in part, supported by the fact that a society involves various identities, as does the space upon which society is built. Dovey (2009) has referred to Deleuze and Guattari in terms of how they have discussed notions of *boundaries* that express a process of inscription, or *territorialization*, followed by a process of erasure and re-establishment of a new territory, or *deterritorialization* and *reterritorialization*, as will be explored in the following section.

Boundaries and assemblage: territorialization-detorialization & agency

In addition to the connotations of the word *territory* in terms of limiting and bounding a space, Deleuze and Guattari claim that "territoriality is creative rather than defensive, a form of becoming at home in the world" (Dovey, 2009, p. 17). For these scholars, *territorialization* and

deterritorialization are best described as sequential processes in an uninterrupted cycle, where the continuous process of delineating and erasing a boundary is performed; a boundary that can be tangible as well as intangible (i.e., social, socio-economic, etc.). The intangible boundaries bring the work of Hardt & Negri (2001) into this discussion. In their masterpiece *Empire,* Hardt & Negri argue that in the *Empire*, there are no material boundaries as in the era of imperialism. In contrast, in a new political order driven by globalization, boundaries take different forms that are not necessarily visible (i.e., regulatory, administrative) (Hardt & Negri, 2001).

This understanding of territory defined by a boundary has influenced the concept of *assemblage*. Indeed, *territorialization-detorialization* is one dimension of *assemblage* for Deleuze and Guattari (1987). The permeable nature of a boundary is due to its reliance on unfixed factors, framing its temporary shape until the next change. In summary, a territory is a moment of stable *assemblage* (Dovey, 2009). It is noteworthy to refer to the overlapping relationship between the material-expressive boundaries which encompass tangible/physical boundaries (referred to as the material) and intangible boundaries (referred to as the expressive) at work in a given *assemblage*, and the processes of *territorialization* and *deterritorialization*, as the former dimension is responsible for the latter (Dovey, 2009). In other words, change in the material-expressive boundaries entails change in the constitutive factors in a system, which in turn disassemble and reassemble it, forging a new spatial order every time, indicating a process of *territorialization* and *deterritorialization*.

Similarly, *territoriality* or segmentaries, as introduced by Deleuze & Guattari (1987), has been divided into rigid and supple segmentarities. The supple segmentarity is based on flows of

networks in which another subdivision has been suggested by Deleuze & Guattari: the tree-like structure and the rhizomatic structure. The tree-like structure includes three forms of relations: binary (based on societal categorization), linear (sequential relation), and circular (hierarchical relation). Visually, the tree-like structure shows a more hierarchical relation that limits the channels through which a flow can proceed. On the contrary, the Rhizomatic structure involves more horizontal networks and connections, enabling the production of more fluid and creative *assemblages*.

The rhizomatic structure indicates that *assemblage* theory is not a hierarchical approach that emphasizes top-down actors. Van et al. (2018) also argue that an *assemblage* is not controlled by a hierarchical unified actor, but rather that each agent constituting an *assemblage* has agency and, accordingly, has an effect on that *assemblage*. In this context, agency is defined by Grundmann & Dravenau (2010, p. 87) as "The actors' capacity to act in self-determined and creative ways against the backdrop of constraining social structures". Similarly, McFarlane (2009) claims that *agency* is de-centered, and power is distributed according to *assemblage* thinking; a bottom-up approach that gives equal attention to all constitutive factors (i.e., refugees, government, NGOs, etc.). According to McFarlane (2009), power is not an object; it is contingent and can coexist, meaning multiple power sources or forms can exist simultaneously, and shift over time.

In studies that view the camp as an *assemblage* (Ramadan, 2013; Abourahme, 2015), refugees are a constitutive actor in this *assemblage*, transcending the limited view of the camp that focuses mostly on the power structures in charge of managing the camp, and calling for a holistic

approach that underscores the complex networks and relations that constitute the camp and the home within the camp.

With that being said, the following section addresses the theoretical framework of this research project, grounded in the *assemblage* theory.

1.4. Theoretical Framework: The logic of *assemblage*

Scholars of urban studies, planning and geography offer rich theoretical frameworks to study the space as relational and always in process (Deleuze & Guattari, 1987; McFarlane, 2009; Ong & Collier, 2005). These frameworks present deep insights into understanding the complex nature of the camp space. Real-world examples of refugee camps represent a complex social phenomenon, in which space is multiple, fluid, and relational. The theoretical framework I found capable of capturing this always-in-process nature is based on *assemblage* theory, developed by Deleuze & Guattari (1987). *Assemblage* theory has recently received great interest in urban studies and geography (McFarlane & Farias, 2011; Farías & Bender, 2012). However, Ramadan (2013) was the first one to apply this framework to refugee camps. I build my work on the foundation established by Ramadan (2013) and use *assemblage* theory as the research theoretical framework to understand the developments of the camp, the home, and refugees' sustainable livelihood practices in the camp.

1.5. Research Hypothesis

After reviewing some of the late theories on marginalized spaces—*state of exception* by Agamben (1998), a*bject spaces* by Isin & Rygiel (2007), and c*ontemporary figures of heterotopias*

by Agier (2012)—I focus on perspectives that adopt a more fluid understanding of the space and that concentrate on the study of the role of different actors, dynamics and networks that make up camp space. This perspective also recognizes the effect of different contexts and flows on the reproduction of camp space, addressing different aspects of refugee camps, such as refugees, socio-economic factors, intimate spaces (i.e., home) and political life, etc. *Assemblage* theory, as developed by Deleuze & Guattari (1987), summarizes this non-static state of refugee camps and their inhabitants' regenerative ways of living beyond its material limitations.

Through the lens of *assemblage* theory and building upon studies that seek to reclaim the agency of camp dwellers (Ramadan, 2013; Abourahme, 2015), I view the camp as an *assemblage* formation and emphasize the agency of refugees in the camp. That is, I argue that a camp is not static, but rather plays different roles at different times, locations and settings, operating beyond its physical boundaries and shedding light on the role of refugees as active actors in the *assemblage* of the camp. The role of refugees is expressed through their *home-making* practices as *assemblages*, exemplifying the means through which their agency is exercised in the camp. My research builds upon the foundation established by Ramadan (2013) and applies the *assemblage* theory framework to understand developments at both the camp and individual dwelling scales. I also utilize the *assemblage* approach to investigate practices that refugees utilize to sustain their livelihoods (specifically, related to their dwelling adaptations and home economics) within camps, specifically in three Palestinian refugee camps in Jordan: Baqa'a, Al-Husn, and Talbiyeh. Although my research does not involve a systematic comparison across different camps, I aim to provide some comparison regarding specific themes. This provides

greater insight into how distinct micro-geographical and social bases of camps shape the parameters of camp dweller agency.

It is worth noting that *assemblage* theory is not limited to reading spaces that the study proposes are *assemblage*s, such as the camp and home. Rather, this framework helps understand that everything is an *assemblage* and that actors within them interrelate and create networks and connections.

1.6. Research Methodology

For my dissertation, I use the three-manuscript model. Each manuscript focuses on distinct content, but all three employ a theoretical framework based on the *assemblage* theory. My aim is to understand the refugee camp from a bottom-up approach, where the agency of refugees flourishes through *home-making* practices. I delve into the home and *home-making* practices of refugees, tracing the constellation of actors and flows shaping these practices. This approach enables an understanding of developments at both scales, the camp and the home, and provides insight into refugees' sustainable livelihood practices in the camp.

In this thesis, I draw from empirical and spatial data drawn from interviews with key actors (i.e., refugees and representatives of UNRWA and DPA), direct observation and graphic journaling undertaken in three Palestinian refugee camps in Jordan: Baqa'a, Al-Husn, and Talbiyeh.

The following methods are used in this section:

- Field visits: I carried out fieldwork between November 2021 and April 2022, visiting the three camps several times after obtaining official approval from the Jordanian government represented in DPA. During these visits, I engaged in participant observation and took photographs.

- Interviews: I conducted a total of 62 interviews, utilizing three types of interviews with different groups of people. These included refugees, representatives of UNRWA's head office in Jordan, the ICIP team in Amman, the DPA's head office in Amman, and DPA offices in the three camps. Interviews were conducted using semi-structured, in-depth, and video or phone interview formats, as explained below:

1. Video or phone interviews: I used this type of interview when I was unable to be in Jordan due to COVID-19 restrictions, mainly with officials and representatives of UNRWA and DPA.

2. Semi-structured interviews: I primarily used this type of interview with UNRWA and DPA members working in the DPA offices located in the refugee camps. However, I also conducted semi-structured interviews with refugees during field visits.

3. In-depth interviews: This type of interview was primarily aimed at refugees, providing first-hand experiences of their everyday lives in the camp. The goal was to view the camp space as lived and inhabited by refugees, rather than constructed hierarchically by UNRWA and the Jordanian government.

I present the data collected in interviews in the form of excerpts (or vignettes), drawing inspiration from Emerson et al. (2011). This method places the voices of key actors at the core of the argument through the following steps: (1) introducing a theme or concept, (2) providing a brief introduction to the interview excerpt, (3) incorporating a direct quote from the interview or fieldnote, and (4) concluding with an analysis of the excerpt in relation to other observations,

reflections, or the relevant literature. I, also, use graphic representation such as sketches, diagrams, AutoCAD drawings, and photography for data analysis.

The spatial aspect of my research primarily involves qualitative analysis of maps and statistical data. The following methods are employed to collect the necessary data:

- Archival research: This includes satellite images taken for the three selected case study camps (Baqa'a, Al-Husn, and Talbiyeh) for the years 1978, 1992, and 2022. These maps were provided by the archive of the Royal Jordanian Geographic Center (RJGC). Other images and studies were sourced from the UNRWA archives.

-Published and unpublished documents and reports: I collected data from published and unpublished documents, studies, reports, statistics, and guidelines from the UN and UNRWA.

In conclusion, this chapter offers an outline of the thesis structure and introduces the three primary bodies of literature that cut across the three manuscripts: refugee camps/marginalized spaces, *home-making,* and *assemblage* theory. Upon reviewing the literature on refugee camps and similar marginalized spaces, it becomes apparent that some approaches, by predominantly focusing on power structures, may underestimate the potential for refugees to change, shape, or influence the spaces they inhabit. These perspectives often overlook crucial characteristics of the camp, such as their temporally and spatially transformative nature and the agency of refugees. Thus, I build on theories that emphasize the significance of refugees as active agents in shaping their living spaces and seek to unsettle their portrayal as passive and voiceless. This discussion leads to literature that focuses on *home-making* as an expression of refugee agency,

and ultimately to literature on *assemblage* theory. In this work, I have chosen to adopt *assemblage* theory as the theoretical framework, with the aim of focussing on the potential for empowerment in refugee camps. The subsequent chapters further explore these themes and delve into the nuances of refugee agency and the potential for spatial and social transformations at the scale of the home and the camp.

The following chapter shifts focus from the realm of theory to practice. It examines the contextual background of the research case studies, more specifically, the historical evolution of the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA) and its policies regarding Palestinian refugee camps from 1950 to the present.

Chapter 2| Context

UNRWA Policy Evolution: Historical context

2.1. Introduction

While the focus of this thesis is on the camps that were constructed in Jordan in the aftermath of the 1967 *Naksa*[2], an Arabic term refers to the second displacement of the Palestinian population that occurred following Israel's victory in the Six-Day War in1967, it is instructive to provide an overview of the historical context of the main organization tasked with overseeing the camps. This chapter discusses the evolution of the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA) by providing a historical overview of UNRWA's policies for Palestinian refugee camps from 1950 until present. In particular, this discussion addresses the implications of UNRWA's policies regarding housing and shelter. Examining UNRWA's history shows that it has undergone multiple transformations throughout its existence, shifting roles from a *regulator/provider* of shelter (from roughly 1950 to 1987) to that of a *facilitator* (post-1987), increasingly downloading responsibilities to residents.

Although UNRWA's early annual reports refer to these camps as temporary (UNRWA, 1951, 1952), a gradual shift has taken place within the organization towards ensuring the permanency of the camps. This policy shift was tracked using the following methods:

1: An analysis of the digital library of the United Nations (UN), which contains UNRWA policies and annual reports

2: An analysis of unpublished documents obtained from the UNRWA archives

3: Interviews conducted with UNRWA representatives in Jordan, Department of Palestinian Affairs (DPA) representatives of the Jordanian government, and Palestinian refugees in Jordan.

This analysis of the evolution of UNRWA policy addresses the changes that took place in relation to camp development and governance and identifies the key factors responsible for this shift. The chapter concludes by demonstrating how the process of policy making is also a process of institution-making, and how the factors that have shaped the policy context over time have thus shaped the evolution of UNRWA itself.

2.2. UNRWA Policy Context and Analysis

Palestinian refugee camps were initially established in the wake of what Palestinians have termed the *Nakba*, referring to the massive displacement of Palestinians in 1948, providing temporary shelter for around 750,000 displaced refugees, with most being relocated across ceasefire lines (west and east of the Jordan Valley, Gaza, Syria, and Lebanon). The second wave of Palestinian refugees (around 400,000) were displaced in 1967, half of which were recognized as refugees for the second time, having initially been internally displaced in 1948 (UNRWA CIP Guidelines, 2011, p.6)[3]. 1.4 million refugees out of 5 million registered by UNRWA were living in Jordan at the time (UNRWA CIP Guidelines, 2011). Prior to the establishment of UNRWA in 1950, host countries of Palestinian refugees located and administered camps. In Jordan, the government rented selected sites from landowners and provided refugees with tents and water with the help of humanitarian organizations (UNRWA CIP Guidelines, 2011). The Jordanian government intended to locate the campsites away from the borders and closer to urban areas where they could be more easily monitored by the state.

2.2.1. First Phase (1950-1987): The UNRWA as regulator

In 1950, UNRWA was established by the UN in response to the Arab Israeli War, taking on responsibility to provide aid to Palestine refugees. Early UNRWA annual reports lack indications of permanency or semi-permanency in the camps' construction (Hanafi et al., 2014). Accordingly, the first shelters provided to refugees by UNRWA were tents. However, UNRWA did not plan for refugees to be passive recipients of aid, but rather self-supporting actors. For instance, the process of installing shelter provided by UNRWA was the refugees' mission. In the early-to-mid 1950s, harsh winter conditions pushed UNRWA to launch the "first large-scale shelter building program" known as the UNRWA shelter program 1955 (Misselwitz & Hanafi, 2009, p.6), during which tents were replaced with huts, despite strikes and widespread discontent over this perceived shift toward permanency of the camps.

Refugees developed a sense of ownership over the structures they had installed and lived in. UNRWA took this into consideration and added shelter units (huts) next to refugees' existing structures, consolidating the camp layout based on social ties" (Misselwitz & Hanafi, 2009). For example, the pattern developed by the refugees of Al-ma'ari camp, in the West Bank, reflected how their villages of origin were organized. This was called the "quarters' system", in which some of the physical features that existed in their past homes, such as the *Hosuh* (or internal courtyard) were reconstructed again in the camp context. In effect, refugees in Al-ma'ari camp undertook a process of place-making. In a camp context, Jean (2015) argues that refugees try to connect their physical environments to their "social worlds'' through the practice of place-making. Such practices provide insight into the ways that refugees both integrate and simultaneously repel this post-relocation environment (Jean, 2015). Seemingly aware of such practices, UNRWA's "Huts-

document" (Jean, 2015, p.224), formulated in the 1950s, has incorporated housing schemes that adopt these desires. Here, refugees demonstrate agency in influencing and shaping UNRWA's work.

Some instances of UNRWA's attempts to integrate the refugees' different cultural preferences in the design of these huts include the inclusion of courtyards, central living areas, and the intentional design of the dwelling's facade, which faces the street as a plain wall, ensuring privacy for residents (Hanafi, et al., 2014). By doing so, UNRWA aimed to create an overarching layout or urban model accepted by refugees and followed in their camps. In other words, UNRWA aimed to add a sense of planning to the camps and shift its condition from chaos to order. What motivated UNRWA to take this step after years of strikes against permanency in camp construction was a change in refugees' attitude towards the camp itself (Hanafi et al., 2014). Refugees sought stability for their families while also not compromising their right to return.

However, tent procurement was hampered by economic factors. According to a 1951 UNRWA report, "tents are becoming almost impossible to find on world markets at any price, and the refugees are therefore being encouraged to put up small structures for themselves" (UNRWA, 1951, p. 4). Indeed, a number of geopolitical factors, including the neoliberal orientations of funders, shaped UNRWA's role as shelter provider and regulator. According to Hanafi et al. (2014), self-support was encouraged by UNRWA, who intended to make the camps more economical for the host country and humanitarian agencies (p.226).

According to the *UNHCR Planning Minimum Emergency Standards*[4], refugees should live in a safe and healthy place with dignity. UNRWA campsite guidelines state that a proper camp should

include “a good site location, climate, accessibility, topography, and soil of the campsite”. However, the host countries had different, if not contradictory criteria, especially when camps are not welcomed by neighboring landowners and stakeholders. A camp was viewed by the Jordanian Government as negatively impacting and putting pressure on the surrounding area. This was expressed explicitly by refugees and DPA staff members, in the interviews that I conducted. They expressed that there has been a consistent stigmatization of refugees and refugee camps, and the government has sought to select camp locations that would enhance manageability and control. However, it is crucial for camps to have access to nearby employment opportunities and essential services (main roads, infrastructure, etc.,) (M. Khudor, personal communication, Al-Husn camp November 30th, 2021). These testimonials highlight the significance of the host country in deciding the location and nature of camps.

From the outset, UNRWA required refugees to go through a “registration” procedure, through which it was determined which refugees “deserves” assistance and aid. Refugees need to adhere to certain criteria in all aspects of life from shelter location, construction material, national number/citizenship criteria, in order to be considered a beneficiary of UNRWA services. Any attempt to live outside these regulatory boundaries created by UNRWA and the Jordanian state would render that refugee ineligible or illegal. This type of policy discourse was acting in advance to any expected change.

The UNRWA was concerned that camps would develop into slums or crowded and unmanageable settlements. As a response to this concern, UNRWA gave each family of refugees a relatively generous size of land totaling 7.5m by 14 m, allowing refugees to build upon their initial shelter as desired. This was in anticipation of future increases in family size among refugees; however, a

sense of organization and planning was intended to be applied through the provision of equal plots to refugees (UNRWA CIP, personal communication, October 14th, 2021). Again, UNRWA aims to regulate the camp space, in spite of pressure from the state, local residents, and refugees themselves.

Nevertheless, the rapid increase in refugee population, along with the temporary nature of refugee construction, contributed to the early lack of central planning in refugee camps. Between 1950-1967, UNRWA tested a number of different plans when establishing the refugee camps in Jordan. For instance, Al-Wahdat Palestinian Camp in Jordan was recognized as a failure, even though UNRWA established the camp without outside interference (Hanafi et al., 2014). According to John W. Tanner (chief of the technical division at UNRWA headquarters in Beirut from the mid 1950-1970) the issue was due to substandard construction material in building early camps, such as Al-Wahdat (Hanafi et al., 2014, p.232).

UNRWA's efforts prior to 1967 pushed them to upgrade and rethink their policies for future camps, shifting the responsibility of shelter construction—including the procurement of materials—from the agency to refugees themselves, with UNRWA focusing instead on health and education. In other words, UNRWA's new approach was to build the human rather than the home. It is at this point that a shift in UNRWA's vision regarding the temporary nature of refugee camps in Jordan towards a longer-term existence and more self-construction (DPA staff member, Personal communication, December 20th, 2021). The lack of funding was one of the reasons behind this change in attitude. Besides, the UNRWA aimed to prevent a reliance-on-aid mentality among refugees (Hanafi et. al, p.233). As a result, UNRWA sought to end the shelter program in the 1960s in an attempt to leave this task for refugees to handle (Hanafi et al., 2014).

2.2.1.1. 1967: Jordanian government pressure, Refugees, & International Fund

In the aftermath of the Six-Day War in 1967, a second wave of Palestinian refugees fleeing to Jordan ensued. Many became refugees for a second time, having already been internally displaced following the 1948 Nakba. In June of this year, Jordan and UNRWA provided supplies, including shelter and food, to this wave of refugees as part of a large-scale humanitarian operation (Hanafi et al., 2014, p.234). According to UNRWA annual reports, camp construction after 1967 was different from that which took place in the wake of the 1948 war. A change in both Jordanian and UNRWA policy regarding construction guidelines reflects that new hidden networks were at work.

The first post-1967 tented camps were placed along the Jordan Valley, which separates Jordan from Palestine (Melon, 2012). The location of the post-1967 camps was meant to pressure Israel to honor the right to return by placing them along the borderline. Thus, six emergency camps were established. These camps were planned to be categorized based on the status of refugees residing them (displaced, refugees, ex-Gazans)[5] but this proved logistically challenging and was ultimately abandoned (Hanafi et sl., 2014).

An unexpected result of the closeness of the 1967 camps to the borderline was the birth of the Palestinian "militant resistance" inside these camps in the form of the Palestinian Liberation Organization (PLO). PLO members attacked Israel from inside these camps along the borders. These events concerned the Jordanian state, especially after Israel had attacked the camps in Jordan in retaliation. The PLO in Jordan was seen as a threat to Jordanian sovereignty. As a result, the camps were relocated again away from the borderlines and friction points with the Israeli army. As well, the PLO moved to Lebanon in the 1970s, leaving Jordan after the events of the

“Black September”[6] civil war in Jordan, which took place between the PLO and the Jordanian army.

Based on the preceding discussion, this study shows obvious connections between camp construction and geopolitics, including the decisions underlying their location. This was tracked from the very first choice of the location of the Palestinian camps close to the borderline. From a Jordanian point of view, their location was recognized as a way to pressure decision makers to return refugees to Palestine. However, this instead resulted in the emergence of militant resistance in the form of the PLO. Also due to geopolitical reasons (the concern of building a state inside the state), in 1970 the Jordanian government initiated a civil war against the PLO, also known as Black September (see Endnote 6), resulting in the relocation of the camp. Thus, the transfer of the camps to new, more controllable spaces was the solution to a political problem. In other words, geopolitics and the host state are key factors in the camp *assemblages*, interfering with and shaping UNRWA decisions.

2.2.1.1.1. Between the right to return and the permanency of camps

For Palestinian refugees, there has always been a dilemma between the right to return and the permanency of camp construction. Many factors are at play in this dilemma, including the difficult conditions facing refugees living in temporary shelter. According to most interviewees from the three camps, harsh winter conditions post-1967 pressured UNRWA to enhance camp construction, furthering the trend toward permanency. This began when UNRWA received government permission to build semi-permanent shelters, which were previously illegal. This step was faced by further strikes by refugees, preventing workers from moving forward with the building process. Yet, such actions were short lived as refugees soon started to accept the new

plans for the camp construction. Time was a key factor in the shift in refugees' attitude towards more permanent structures in the camp (H. Sqour, personal communication, Al-Husn camp, November 30th, 2021). Kh. Awwad, a refugee from Al-Husn camp, expressed a similar sentiment:

> "After all, we are human beings, years were passing, while no serious steps were being taken by the international community to find us a solution. We were promised that it is a matter of days, then we will return back to our villages and land. Day by day, the picture was starting to become clearer: No return in the near future! The only way, for us, to get out of that waiting zone was to start a new life in the camp, as if we are staying here forever. However, we didn't and will not give up the right to return to Palestine, no matter what. Even if we build a castle here, it will not make up for an inch in Palestine" (Kh. Awwad, Personal communication, Al-Husn camp, December 20th, 2021)

Similarly, S. Araisheh, another camp resident, adds:

> "It is not about the materiality, or the type of the shelter material construction that decides whether we are going to stay here longer or not. I was one of those who believed that building higher quality shelters means a longer stay in the camp, and I firmly opposed any step of that kind of construction. At the same time, I was seeing my family suffering from winter cold and summer heat- It is human nature, we need the basics to survive, otherwise we die!" (S. Araisheh, personal communication, Baqa'a camp, January 5th, 2022)

These more permanent structures were implemented when UNRWA tested eight experimental prototypes in Baqa'a camp. Of these prototypes, the asbestos shelter type was UNRWA's preferred model and was eventually used in Palestinian camps in Jordan. Looking at the choice of this prototype through the lens of *assemblage* theory provides insight into the key factors that had a major impact on the UNRWA's shelter selection. Conport, the multinational company supplying prefab shelters worked with the Jordanian government to promote this prototype, even though some UNRWA members were against this decision due to the material being expensive, flammable, and hazardous to health, according to refugees interviewed in Al-Husn camp. However, the choice of this particular shelter was viewed as less permanent than the other prototypes, which suited the refugees' and government's interest in honoring the right to return.

An exploration of UNRWA’s policies demonstrates how humanitarianism cannot be separated from politics. This is clear in UNRWA’s policies that encourage refugee self-sufficiency. Geopolitical motivations are evident in attempts to make a “useful future” for refugees in a host country, that is, to stabilize the region politically (Feldman, 2008). Regarding the choice of prefabs (asbestos shelter), a DPA interviewee stressed that this choice was preferred due to the ease with which it could be organized, leaving the camp with a planned layout (personal communication, November 30th, 2021). This is especially evident in the intention to organize the camp into differentiated categories. In spite of that intention, disorder was commonplace in the camps. For example, when unregistered refugees from outside the camp squatted along the camp fringes and pressed to enter the camp on occasion. Notably, in 1970, camps began to be identified as “refugee camps,” rather than “UNRWA” camps, shifting responsibility away from the agency (Hanafi, et al., 2014). This occurred in tandem with PLO activities in the Palestinian camps, rendering camps as largely “Palestinian” rather than “humanitarian” spaces. Meanwhile, the shelter program administered by UNRWA was being diminished, a change justified by the organization by prioritizing education, health and social services rather than shelters. However, a refugee interviewee (A. Mashoor, personal communication, Al-Husn camp, December 20th, 2021) claimed that this was not the case, and this limitation in UNRWA’s responsibilities was politically driven.

According to the 1970-71 UNRWA annual report, installations in camps were either huts built by UNRWA, to which refugees can add later; or shelters built by refugees supplemented by construction material provided by the agency. Over time, UNRWA annual reports demonstrate a gradual withdrawal of the agency from shelter construction responsibility. For instance, in the

annual reports of the early 1980s, it is clear that UNRWA had seriously limited its assistance regarding shelter construction to only the poor refugees. This new policy coincided with an increase in "self-help" projects, through which the UNRWA funded less than 10% of the total cost of shelter construction, with the rest funded by the host country, Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs), and—primarily—refugees. By 1985, the assistance that UNRWA provided mostly consisted of an in-kind fund (expenses, commodities and services)—a fund that had itself decreased 2.3% from the previous year (UNRWA AR, 1986). Also, a shortfall that occurred in projects' funds in 1985 was indicated in the same report. In annual reports following 1985, policies were updated to reflect UNRWA's broader shift away from housing and toward social service provision. Through this shift, UNRWA aimed to promote self-reliance that would make refugees less dependent on them, freeing them from the 'refugee mentality'. The diagram below (Figure 1) shows how education and health were the sectors that the UNRWA focused on the most during this period.

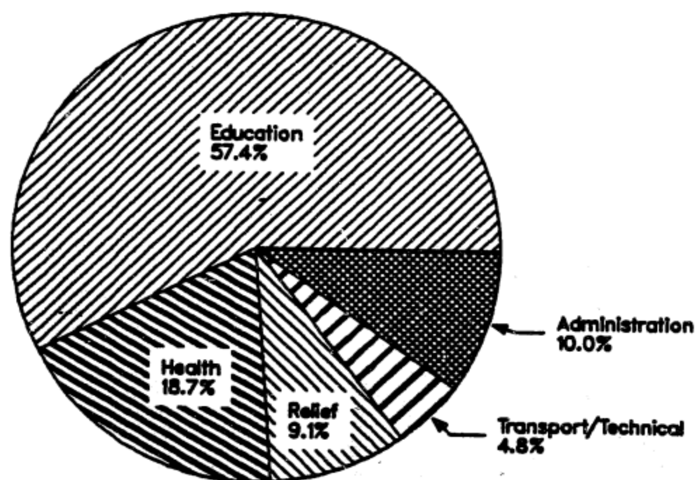


Figure 1. UNRWA activities as percentage of 1986 Annual Budget (UNRWA Annual Report, 1986).

UNRWA's new budgetary priorities are referred to in the annual reports as "austerity measures'' necessary to fill the gap of $67 million United States Dollar (USD) between income and expenses

for the year 1986. These budget cuts were achieved primarily through reducing staffing and construction projects. The 1985 AR shows that staffing costs accounted for up to 90% of UNRWA expenses. Cutting some staff benefits (e.g., the "Adjust provision local staff separation benefits" from $5000 to zero) along with a decrease in the overall number of staff helped, among other measures, to decrease the budgetary gap to approximately $27 million USD. Additionally, construction of shelters stopped at the beginning of that year. Meanwhile, an appeal urged countries including Canada, Australia, Japan and the US to help ameliorate the financial difficulties that UNRWA faced.

2.2.2. The Second Phase (1988-Until Present): The UNRWA as a "Facilitator"

The 1988 AR presents how the stock market crash of 1987, commonly referred to as "Black Monday" that resulted in a 60% loss of market value, had affected UNRWA's budget, as the US dollar had weakened. As a consequence, funding from the European community increased accordingly from around $31 million USD in 1986 to $41 million USD in 1987. Because of this economic situation, UNRWA launched the "Medium Term Plan"[7] that covers the years from 1989 to 1991, in which a goal of "zero growth in administrative cost" is set.

During this period and before, the Arab region refused to provide any donations to build Palestinian refugee camps outside Palestine, recognizing this act as affirming Palestinian existence outside their historical homeland. However, in 1991, Kuwait became the first Arab nation to donate to UNRWA for the development of Palestinian camps. This coincided with UNRWA's Medium Term Plan. Each year, the UNRWA shelter & relief program increased reliance

on “self-support” and “income earning ability” (UNRWA AR, 1988, p.11) for each family, due to economic difficulties affecting UNRWA’s budget.

Interviewees from the UNRWA Infrastructure and Camp Improvement Programme ICIP team and among refugees have asserted that, during that period, the quality of construction material considered legal by authorities was enhanced. Reinforced concrete columns and ceilings were used instead of zinc and asbestos materials. This was the result of new shelter construction works in 1988 being transferred from UNRWA to Jordan’s newly established "Department of Palestinian Affairs (DPA), which once was the “Ministry of the Occupied Land Affairs”. This transfer of powers and responsibilities from UNRWA to a department of the Jordanian government is significant for several reasons. It was perceived by interviewed refugees as a way for UNRWA to disavow its obligations towards Palestinian refugees, shifting the responsibility of sheltering refugees to the Jordanian government (personal communication, Al-Husn Camp, December 20th, 2021). This aligns with a broader political goal of establishing an alternative home for Palestinians in Jordan. A quote that F. Al-ayesh (first-generation refugee) shared, through an interview, reflects refugee opinion of this goal:

> “Wider relations and interests attempt hardly to erase any entity that reminds the world of who we are, and where we came from. Firstly, they turned us into Jordanian citizens, and now the UNRWA is gradually withdrawing from the scene. The UNRWA is the only clear-cut evidence left that proves our right to return to our land” (F. Al-ayesh, Al-Husn camp, personal communication, November 30th, 2021).

This surprising event evoked feelings of resentment and frustration among the refugees—feelings that the government likely attempted to assuage through the updated construction law that allows the use of more durable construction material. Although this met refugees’ demands to improve building material quality, geo-political demands remained unaddressed. Of note was

the change in name of the Ministry of the Occupied Land Affairs to the Department of Palestinian Affairs, which diminishes the foundational geo-political dimension of the Palestinian cause. Indeed, these updated construction guidelines reflect a desire to make a new durable, settled version of the camp (Personal communication, Al-Husn camp, November 30th, 2021). The role of the host country was key in the shift from UNRWA's role as a regulator to that of a facilitator—from a proactive player to merely an observer or mediator.

The 1990 AR shows another shortfall in external funding, resulting in project delays. From the 1988 AR onwards, shelter construction ceased to be included as an UNRWA responsibility, replaced by discussion of healthcare clinics, schools, relief and social services that targeted "disadvantaged individuals and groups," as construction work had been transferred to the DPA.

1993 marked the start of peace talks between the PLO and the Israeli government. This was reflected in the AR of 1993, which was dominated by a list of expectations – versus the reality – regarding the continuation of peace negotiation and its implications. UNRWA's cooperation and relations with Israel were moving in a seemingly positive direction, with commitments being made to school and clinic construction projects. As a result, UNRWA anticipated positive impacts at the broader economic and political levels. However, it seems that Israel peace talks did not extend beyond the limits of the meeting rooms. In addition to the already worsening socio-economic situation, there was no actual implementation (in the field) of the Israeli promises about sovereignty.

UNRWA's 1993 AR demonstrates the impacts of Israeli policy on housing in refugee camps during this era. Notably, Israel led a wide-ranging home demolition/sealing campaign, in which it imposed three types of home-related punishments on Palestinians: punitive home demolition,

sealed home, and shooting/exploding home techniques. When carried out on a large scale, home demolition can lead to a neighborhood evacuation (UNRWA, 1993 AR). More evacuated persons require more assistance and place additional burden on the already exhausted budget of the UNRWA.

In the 1990s, two key events were taking place in the region that affected UNRWA's budget: the Oslo Accord peace negotiations and the Gulf War that resulted in 200,000 Palestinians fleeing Kuwait and looking for refuge. In 1992, the number of registered refugees in Jordan in the wake of the Gulf war increased from 1.01 million to 1.07 million. This coincided with an unusually harsh storm that hit Jordan in 1992, leaving 723 damaged shelters. At this time, UNRWA underwent an evaluation process of a number of its programs, including educational vocational courses, paramedical diploma programs, and the Special Hardship Cases (SHC) program[8] (See Figure 2), in order to measure their efficiency and reduce unnecessary expenditures. In addition, a new program entitled "the income-generation program" was launched in 1998 with the aim of advancing refugees' self-reliance skills—part of an overall emphasis on self-dependence, according to the 1999 AR. For instance, there was an emergence of community-based organizations such as the Community Rehabilitation Centre (CRC), that worked toward greater self-sufficiency within camp society. These changes in UNRWA policy illustrate the link between policy making and political-economic and geo-political factors, highlighting the underlying forces that shape both the Agency and its policy.

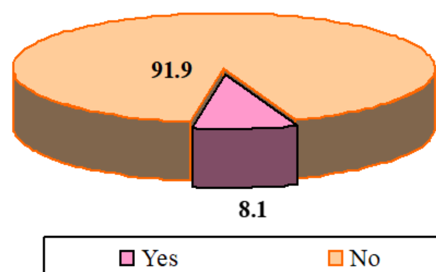
3.5 Special Hardship cases

Q26: Households registered as special hardship cases (SHC)

Table 24 Distribution HHs according to their registration as a special hardship case (SHC)

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Yes	259	8.0	8.1	8.1
No	2930	90.7	91.9	100.0
Total	3189	98.7	100.0	
Missing	42	1.3		
Total	**3231**	**100.0**		

Figure 15 Distribution HHs according to there registration as a special hardship case (SHC)



- 8.1% from total HHs registered as special hardship cases (SHC**).**

Figure 2. An example of a study that evaluates the percentage of the beneficiaries of the SHC program offered by UNRWA in Al-Husn camp. It shows how the SHC percentage does not exceed 8.1% of the camp's residents (UNRWA Archive, 2012).

The 2003 AR addresses regional unrest and security issues. For example, the invasion of Iraq resulted in tens of thousands of Palestinians fleeing the country, some of whom were refugees living in Iraq. That unrest resulted in an increase in responsibilities required from UNRWA, including establishing tented camps at the Jordanian-Iraqi borders for those fleeing the war. In addition, the 2nd Palestinian *Intifada*[9] and the increase in "suicide bombings" across Palestine led to large-scale Israeli military operations in the West Bank and Gaza. These operations mainly targeted the residential built environment and infrastructure. Refugee camps had their share of these military incursions, resulting in the demolition of 506 shelters in the West Bank and the damaging of 518 shelters in the Gaza Strip (UNRWA AR, 2003). As UNRWA's responsibility is to manage such consequences, the annual budget of the agency was overburdened and their focus was diverted. Therefore, UNRWA emphasized "sufficient voluntary contributions" (UNRWA AR,

2003, p.2) as an alternative way to fulfill the tasks entrusted to them while they faced a continued reduction in external funds—a reduction of 40% compared to the previous year. This continued decrease in funds coincided with an increase in the refugee population, workload and overall responsibilities expected of UNRWA.

This era– the first decade of the 2000s— marked a period of intense external pressure on UNRWA, highlighting the global networks influencing camp assemblage. Beginning with political economic factors, a change in the labor market took place after the 2nd *Intifada* (see Endnote 9), leading the Palestinian economy to experience its most intensive economic recession. The 2003 AR highlights worsening socio-economic conditions and an increase in unemployment rates in both Palestine and Jordan, resulting in UNRWA needing to find sufficient alternatives for Palestinian refugees who could not find work outside the camp. Furthermore, restrictions imposed by the Israeli government impacted UNRWA's supplies, such as commodities, food and medicine, complicating the agency's access to the occupied territories. UNRWA's response to the fallout from this crisis resulted in a significant budget shortfall, which resulted in an appeal for funds launched by the agency. Unfortunately, that appeal was underfunded by $78.8 million, adding to UNRWA's budgetary woes. 2006 was marked by a number of significant political events in the region. In 2006 Hamas won the election in the Gaza Strip, causing suspension of international donations to Palestinians, including from the US, showing a "hostile attitude to Hamas' victory and imposing an international blockade on it at the political, economic, and financial levels." Also, a change in UNRWA's level of organizational development and the inclusion of new, economically powerful funders (i.e., Canada, Australia, Germany) was happening. Regionally, the Arab league joined the UN General Assembly for the first time as an

observer in 2005 along with the PLO, which resulted in enhancement in the area of management, human resources and gender equality of UNRWA's policies. UNRWA's 2006 AR is effective in critiquing Israel's role in restricting and limiting the work of UNRWA in general, and more particularly in Palestine (e.g., through checkpoints and road closures).

Between 2006 and 2007 a new vision and strategy based on the 2004 Geneva Conference and 2005 Arab League meeting were adopted by UNRWA in order to deal with the deteriorating living conditions of refugees in Palestinian camps (See the quote below sourced from the UNRWA archive: the ICIP Guidelines 01):

> "As a response to the Arab League and the Geneva Conference recommendations held in May 2004 UNRWA created a Housing and Camp Improvement Unit at Headquarters Amman, as part of the then Engineering and Construction Services Division, which later became the Department of Infrastructure and Camp Improvement, as part of the Organizational Development to consolidate the Agency's expertise and provide momentum for developing comprehensive shelter/housing strategies and camp improvement policies. Prior to the formation of the Unit, UNRWA used to address matters of shelter rehabilitation through the Special Hardship Assistance Programme run by the Relief and Social Services Department (RSSD)" (UNRWA, 2011, P.4)

As shown in the quote above, these events resulted in the emergence of the Infrastructure and Camp Improvement Program (ICIP), first introduced in Jordan in 2007. This program came as a response to the lack of planning of camp spaces, improving upon UNRWA's existing policy by employing a more participatory approach and "community-driven strategic planning methodology" (Misselwitz & Hanafi, 2009). Through an interview I conducted with the UNRWA ICIP team in Amman on October 14, 2021, the ICIP team manager provided a summary of the work of the ICIP program as follows:

> "Infrastructure and Camp Improvement Program addresses deteriorating living conditions in the Palestine refugee camps. It focuses on improving their physical and social environment through a community-driven planning approach that includes

> refugees in the planning and design processes. Many successful pilot projects are implemented in many camps in Jordan, where REPAC projects upgrade substandard housing in accordance with resident needs. These projects increase our knowledge about the refugees and the camps and how over the years, these camps have transformed from temporary 'tent cities' into hyper-congested masses of multi-story buildings with narrow alleys, characterized by high concentrations of poverty and extreme overcrowding. For us, the ICIP team, this approach helped us know more about how to [respond to] the refugees' needs [through] limited budget and limited areas, which is reflected in design, material, and labors." (Personal Interview with the UNRWA ICIP team in Amman, October 14th, 2021)

The Camp Improvement program had illustrated a significant shift in the approach of UNRWA in Palestinian refugee camps. A DPA staff member working in Al-Husn camp expressed their admiration of this program and the effect it has on the camp:

> "The ICIP program was first introduced in Al-Talbiyeh camp in 2007 as a first experiment. This was followed by a second one in Al-Husn camp in 2008. Since then, the camp has been witnessing improvement projects in stages. This has been applied through the UNRWA, as a facilitator, in accordance with other international NGOs and humanitarian institutions like the KFW and the GIZ who have funded and conducted these projects. What determines the time and nature of the stage applied is the amount of funds the UNRWA receives. In terms of shelter-related projects implemented by the ICIP, they are either: reconstruction, renovation, or rehabilitation. No new shelters are being built by the UNRWA anymore; it is the DPA mission, now, to supervise and approve the construction of new shelters in the camp. The number of the beneficiaries of the shelter-related projects are around 28-35 cases of families most in need" (Personal communication, Al-Husn camp, December 20th, 2021).

UNRWA was trying, through the ICIP, to adopt "best practice" standards or a model policy. UNRWA has continued to apply this community-participatory approach since then, utilizing effective planning strategies, when resources are available. However, this policy has not been universally successful. For example, the ICIP experience in Al-Talbiyeh was not as successful as it was in Al-Husn camp due to poor living conditions and educational standards (Personal communication, Al-Talbiyeh camp, December 8th, 2021). The general adoption of this approach, nonetheless, underscores how the role of UNRWA has been shrinking, with the organization

increasingly acting as a mere "facilitator" who promotes and assists but does not operate or administer the camp.

In recent years, UNRWA has faced hardships among the most challenging in its history. Some have identified these challenges as a systematic campaign aimed at bringing down UNRWA (UNRWA staff members, personal communication, April 26th, 2021). In 2018, the Trump administration suddenly cut funding to UNRWA, claiming the agency was not efficient (Nahmias, 2019). This was followed by a leaked internal ethics report accusing UNRWA of corruption. But the timing of the latter report was deemed suspicious and as aiming to dismantle the agency, according to the Deutsche Welle (DW)[10] report. In 2022, UNRWA commissioner general Philippe Lazzarini expressed the agency's intention to pass their responsibilities to other NGOs and humanitarian agencies. The Department of Refugee Affairs of the Palestine Liberation Organization expressed their categorical rejection of UNRWA Commissioner-General Philip Lazzarini's letter addressed to Palestinian refugees which stipulated increasing partnerships within the United Nations system to provide services on behalf of the agency. This was seen by the PLO as a way "to alter UNRWA's mandate" (Wafa News Agency, 2022)[11]. Since its establishment, UNRWA has been seen by refugees and the international community as a symbol of the right to return, as demonstrated in this excerpt from the 2008 UNRWA AR:

> "The Commission commends UNRWA for its efforts to continue delivering its programmes and services to all Palestine refugees in its fields of operation and the vital role of UNRWA in contributing to regional stability until a just solution is reached, in accordance with relevant United Nations resolutions (General Assembly resolutions 194 (III) and 302 (IV))." (The UNRWA AR 2008)

The General Assembly resolution 194 is held by all UNRWA reports as a legitimate and legal right for refugees. This resolution states that "refugees wishing to return to their homes and live at

peace with their neighbors should be permitted to do so at the earliest practicable date."[9] Thus, the dismantling of UNRWA either directly or indirectly, through gradually passing of responsibilities to other institutions, would put the Palestine right to return at risk.

2.2.3. Conclusion

After reviewing and analyzing UNRWA's policies throughout its history, as well as understanding the context, key factors and networks that have impacted the agency's mandate, a general organizational evolution becomes clear. This evolution helps to understand the process enacting or abandoning certain policies and the impact these decisions have on Palestine refugees and their camps. The role of UNRWA as a humanitarian institution has been changing throughout its history. The chapter identifies two main phases that UNRWA has gone through from 1950 until the present, highlighting the key factors that shaped UNRWA's role during each phase. During the first phase (1950-1987), UNRWA can be described as a regulator or a shelter provider with largely proactive policies. Similar to the second phase, the key factors that shaped the first phase were of a global/external nature. These factors can be categorized into two groups: geopolitics and neo-liberalization. That is, geopolitical factors are the main reason for the existence of Palestine refugees and the establishment of the UNRWA by the UN General Assembly (UNGA)[12] which can be understood as a top-down, neo-colonial political-economic configuration. From the outset, UNRWA has a specific set of criteria and guidelines determining who is allowed to benefit from its services. However, the work on the field was much different from the policy written on paper, as refugees also shaped UNRWA's policies—and the institution itself—through their resistance and overall agency.

The second phase (1988-present) was not an immediate change that occurred at once. It took more than 35 years of gradual shifting in UNRWA as an institution and as a policymaker. During this era, UNRWA adopted the role of a “facilitator” or a “mediator” rather than a regulator. Factors that, ultimately, drive this shift include the agency of refugees and the host country, along with geopolitical and neoliberal political economic factors.

This change is reflected in updated laws and governance systems administering shelter construction in camps, in the annual reports of the UNRWA, and the programs adopted or halted by the agency. The most significant change in the second phase was the shifting of responsibilities for refugee camps in Jordan from UNRWA to the DPA, representing the Jordanian government. This was the first clear sign of the dismantling of UNRWA and its mandate, jeopardizing Palestinian refugees' right to return to their homeland.

This chapter sets up the context within which the discussion in the following chapters is situated. Since *assemblage* is the research approach, tracing the study setting, historical context, and factors involved is crucial. That is, the research findings and their interpretation rely heavily on the context provided, highlighting the possible connections and future applicability.

Manuscript presentation

The manuscript titled "Evolution of Palestinian Camps: Policy Mobilities and the Role of Refugees in *Home-Making* at the Camp Scale" is one of three manuscripts that comprise my larger dissertation, which explores how refugee camps are spatially and temporally constructed through exchanges, interactions, and flows both within and beyond their boundaries, with a particular focus on the agency of refugees within the camp. The target audience of this manuscript is urban planners, architects, policymakers, and human geographers interested in understanding the evolution of refugee camps, policy-making processes, and the extent of refugees' agency in shaping their environments at the camp scale. The prospective scholarly outlets for this manuscript are *Urban Policies, Urban Affairs, and IJURR,* as these highly respected and reputable journals are relevant to my research topic.

This manuscript aims to investigate the relation between policy-making processes of the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees (UNRWA) and the material (i.e., architectural) evolution of three Palestinian refugee camps in Jordan, with a specific focus on the role of refugees in these processes. The previous chapter discussed the evolution of UNRWA policies, highlighting the shift in the role of the institution from a regulator to facilitator. This chapter delves further into UNRWA policies by exploring the material evolution of three Palestinian refugee camps in Jordan: Al-Husn, Baqa'a, and Talbiyeh, and the ways UNRWA policy translated distinctly into each camp's evolution.

UNRWA has been instrumental in assisting Palestinian refugees since the Nakba in 1948. However, there have been limited studies exploring the context surrounding UNRWA policy and its on-the-ground manifestation in understanding how these policies are related to camp evolution and the role of refugees in these processes. The purpose of this text is to challenge the common perception of policy-making and its application through top-down actors (i.e., UNRWA, host country) and to spotlight on factors shaping it, underscoring refugees as key actors in these processes. The three case studies presented in this manuscript demonstrate that despite being subject to the same governance and hosting system, the outcomes of the camps were different in terms of their material evolution. The manuscript utilizes the lens of *assemblage* theory, (Deleuze & Guattari, 1987; De Landa, 2006; McFarlane, 2009; Dovey, 2010) to decode and unravel the factors responsible for these differences, focusing on the role of refugees in the evolution of the camps (i.e., layout and boundaries) and the ways UNRWA policies were manifested differently on the ground. In order to conduct the study, I employ a combination of archival and empirical research, using mixed methods, such as fieldwork-direct observation, interviews, and graphic journaling

This manuscript aligns with the central inquiry of the dissertation, which concerns the spatial and temporal developments of refugee camps. Specifically, it scrutinizes the underlying factors and flows that contribute to these developments, with a particular emphasis on the active involvement of refugees in shaping the layout and boundaries of the camps. It addresses the dimension of the dissertation question that pertains to the scale of the camp.

Chapter 3 | First Manuscript

The Evolution of Palestinian Refugee Camps: Policy Mobilities and the Role of Refugees in *Home-Making* at the Camp Scale

Abstract

Much has been said about the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees (UNRWA) as a humanitarian institution assisting Palestine refugees in the wake of what Palestinians have termed the Nakba, referring to the massive displacement of Palestinians in 1948. However, few studies have connected the context surrounding UNRWA policy to its on-the-ground manifestation. Thus, this study focuses on UNRWA's policy as it translates on the ground in relation to the evolution of three Palestinian refugee camps in Jordan: Baqa'a, Al-Husn, and Talbiyeh, placing an emphasis on the role of refugees in shaping these policies and its physical manifestation, along other determinants (i.e., micro-geography). For this purpose, a discussion of *policy mobilities* literature—how policy is a process that is enacted through complex relations of actors, histories, spaces, etc.—aims to convey that policy is not simply a fixed object. Similarly, refugee camps have often been analyzed in a manner that overlooks the multiplicity of actors involved in the development and governance of the camp. Here, I analyze the notions of the *state of exception* (Agamben, 1998), *abject spaces* (Isin & Rygiel, 2007), and *contemporary figures of heterotopias* (Agier, 2012). I argue that these theories, while very successful in exposing the systems of oppression and power structures governing camps, they might underestimate their dynamic nature. This manuscript connects both literatures *policy mobilities* & *refugee camps* to explore how *policy mobility* literature can provide an instructive lens to analyze the divergent forms of camp evolution that are carried out by UNRWA and others. Hence, this study argues that the same policy can produce different outcomes that are, in some ways, similar. Building on *assemblage* theory (Deleuze & Guattari, 1987; De Landa, 2006; McFarlane, 2009; Dovey, 2010) and drawing from ethnographic fieldwork based on interviews, direct observation, graphic journaling and archival research, this chapter focuses the study of the different actors involved in the camps' construction processes and layouts since their establishment by UNRWA and how they have evolved distinctively over time.

3.1. Introduction

Tracing the historical evolution of refugee camps presents a visual and academic documentation of a resilient nation in exile. While Palestine was being gradually eliminated on geographical maps, a non-stop process of homeland expansion was taking place in refugee camps, transcending geopolitical borders. Chief among the dynamics that have shaped this continuing process are the policies of the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA). In particular, UNRWA policies, among other factors, have contributed to shaping three Palestinian refugee camps in Jordan (Baqa'a, Al-Husn, and Talbiyeh), all of which were established in 1968 as emergency camps. These camps were established in the same year, under the same supervision, and under the same governance system. In other words, despite these similar factors and some shared elements across the camps, there are distinct spatial features that characterize each camp. In this chapter, I seek to better understand the divergences and to identify the factors that contribute to the different ways that the camps were instituted in their specific micro-geographies.

Assemblage theory was originally coined by Deleuze and Guattari (1987). It has been widely embraced and expanded upon by scholars across different disciplines, including geography (McFarlane, 2009), philosophy (De Landa, 2006), and architecture (Dovey, 2010). This theory views space as constantly changing, composed of human and non-human components and flows (or actants) whose network connections can transcend spatial limits (Dovey, 2010). Guided by *assemblage* theory, this study aims to explore how UNRWA policy was manifested materially in three different Palestinian camps, unraveling networks of local and global factors involved. To begin this analysis, I first review the literature on 'policy mobilities' that intersects with the

assemblage approach to show how a 'universal' policy model can mutate when taken up in different contexts. I then turn to the literature of marginalized spaces, such as *State of Exception* (Agamben, 1998), *Contemporary Figures of Heterotopias (*Agier, 2012)*,* and *Abject Spaces* (Isin & Rygiel, 2007). In reviewing this literature, it is clear that a special focus is placed on powerful entities in charge of the camps rather than the complex dynamics, factors and agencies that define the temporally and spatially transformative nature of the camp. Thus, I use an analytical lens informed by policy mobility literature to examine the divergent forms of camp development as *assemblages* strongly influenced by UNRWA and other actants, including the Jordanian government and refugees themselves. Next, in the empirical section, I analyze the evolution of three Palestinian camps in Jordan (Talbiyeh, Baqa'a, and Al-Husn camp). I end the chapter with an extensive discussion and concluding remarks regarding the divergent paths of evolution of these three camps, which differ despite being developed through similar policies.

3.2. Literature Review

This section contains a literature review in two sections. The first section, concerning policy mobilities, introduces work on policy-making, the factors involved in shaping this process, and its intersection with *assemblage* theory (Larner & Laurie, 2010; McCann, 2011; Temenos & McCann, 2013; Baker & Temenos 2015; Clarke & Bainton, 2015; Ureta, 2015; Werner & Strambach, 2018; Savage, 2020; Wood 2021). In the second section, I examine the work of scholars who focus on the study of marginalized spaces (camps), including concepts such as *state of exception* (Agamben, 1998), *abject spaces* (Isin & Rygiel, 2007) and *contemporary figures of heterotopias*

(Agier, 2012). This review lays the foundation for the more dynamic understanding of refugee camps I present in the discussion and conclusion sections of this manuscript.

3.2.1. Policy Mobilities

Globalization has promoted the exchange and dissemination of knowledge and information, including 'best practices' in policy-making, across borders. Global networks of experts, policymakers, and institutions facilitate the exchange of experiences and expertise, which can inform policy-making at the local, national, and international levels (Scott & Storper, 2003). The policy mobilities literature has largely focused on examining this making and moving of knowledge, policies, models, and 'best practices' across settings (Peck & Theodore 2010a; McCann 2011; Baker & Temenos 2015; Wood 2021), while encouraging a comprehensive approach to understanding the process of policy making and the factors that shape this process (Temenos & McCann, 2013).

Within geography, this literature has emerged in response to the literature on 'policy transfer' within political science (e.g., Benson & Jordan, 2011), which highlights the role of key institutional actors (e.g., the World Bank or global consultants) in moving policies from one national setting (where they emerged from a particular set of circumstances) to another and which often depicts policies being transferred as 'fully formed' objects with ostensibly similar outcomes (Temenos & McCann, 2013; also see McCann & Ward, 2013). The policy mobilities literature, by contrast, adopts a more relational conception of policy travel and (re)production. While there is an acknowledgment that powerful actors and institutions play a key role in circulating dominant policy models across the globe, the policy mobilities literature emphasizes that 'transfer' does

not occur in a linear or frictionless way (Peck & Theodore 2010a; McCann 2011; Baker & Temenos 2015). For instance, the particular place or context that a policy travels to can impact its implementation. This is described by Temenos & McCann (2013) as "conditioning context," which "shape[s] the mobilities of policies" (p. 348). That is, policies are not "unitary objects" found in a fixed place and moved as a singular package, but rather are mobilized by contexts influenced by power dynamics that determine the actual range of policies that are realized (Peck, 2011).

Studies that fall within the 'policy mobilities' camp seek to advance a broader conceptualization of the actors, spaces and scales that are implicated. Ward (2006), for instance, has argued that actors in the policymaking and dissemination process are not only the 'experts' or global consultants who write policy, but also those who he calls "middling actors." Middling actors are those who spread and implement policies as models and standards, including local actors on the ground—not only elites and international agents. This establishes a clear link between the global and the local, where local actors apply a globalized preferred policy or model, albeit not necessarily in a uniform way.

In their study of knowledge-based services, Werner & Strambach (2018) summarize the complexity and multi-scalarity of policy making through the concept of *policy making networks.* By emphasizing networks, they aim to situate 'experts' and 'consultants' within a range of actors operating at different scales (see also Clarke & Bainton, 2015 on the need to challenge the conception of the nation-state as a bounded entity). Werner & Strambach (2018) also incorporate time as a factor in the policy mobilities field, evaluating knowledge as it changes over time and assessing policy evolution with this consideration.

Some of the most fruitful works are the studies that bring policy mobilities literature together with that of *assemblage* theory. Savage (2020) has merged both concepts using the term *policy assemblage*. This approach enables the use of *assemblage theory* in understanding policy making and mobilities, allowing for a conception of policy that, rather than viewing its components separately and considering the policy as the sum, looks at the nature of the interaction between these components. As De Landa (2006) states, "the properties of a whole cannot be reduced to those of its parts because they are not the result of an aggregation of components' properties but of the actual exercise of their capacities'' (p. 11). That is, when parts are arranged differently, new emergent properties and capacities appear. This approach "look[s] at what power dynamics made some arrangements possible and others not" (Savage, 2019, p. 4). Ureta (2015) argues that one cannot expect a certain effect of a given policy in advance, as policy is dependent on many constituent components, its conditioning context, and the networks it is embedded within. For Savage (2019), this means understanding "policies as contingent *assemblages* defined by relations of exteriority and rendered place-specific in terms of form and impact" (p. 6). Such a conception allows for the varied outcomes—or 'mobilities' in the plural—that a similar 'model' can trigger when it is realized in distinct socio-spatial contexts.

In sum, the work of these scholars emphasize that a policy or model is not a fixed object but rather a process that is enacted through complex relations of actors, histories, spaces and other factors. Inspired by this framing, this study investigates the translation of UNRWA's model camp into the actual camps on the ground. The following section discusses literature that explores marginalized spaces (including refugee camps, concentration camps and ghettos), focusing on the power structures that govern these spaces. The discussion focuses on the concepts of *state*

of exception (Agamben, 1998), *contemporary figures of heterotopias* (Agier, 2012), and *abject spaces* (Isin & Rygiel, 2007).

3.2.2. Refugee Camps-Marginalized Spaces

Agamben's State of Exception

According to Agamben's concept of the *state of exception*, a camp is a space that is excluded from the normal order of things, where exceptional rules become the norm. In his work, Agamben uses historical examples to explain the broader theoretical implications of the *state of exception* and its potential implications for the modern political landscape. Among the examples Agamben has cited as examples of a permanent *state of exception* are the Nazi concentration camps during the Second World War and the emergency measures taken by western democracies in response to 9/11, such as the creation of Guantanamo Bay detention camps.

Within this state, the displaced in camps are considered to be "humans as animals in nature without political freedom" (Owens, 2009, p. 567), or *bare life, naked life,* or *homo sacer* (Agamben, 1998). In Agamben's view, the camp represents the human being as an animal in the political realm, with no distinction between nature and politics or private and public. The camp is also referred to as a "zone of indistinction," where the laws are suspended, and the exceptional laws become permanent rules (Owens, 2009). It is important to differentiate between the *state of exception* and the *zone of indistinction*, as used by Agamben (1998). The *state of exception* refers to the camp as a place excluded from the normal order of things and where laws are suspended. However, the *zone of indistinction* denotes the indistinction between *zoe* or *bios* (natural life and political life) (Vaughan-Williams, 2009). The *zone of indistinction* is also described

by Ramadan (2013): "the camp is a ‘zone of indistinction’ between fact and law, norm and exception, integral to the constitution of the political order of modernity" (p.67). This implies that the camp, as such a zone, is an in-between space where the line between norm and exception is blurred.

In sum, in Agamben's theory, the *state of exception* is a moment in which the sovereign suspends the law to bring order to a particular situation (Owens, 2009). Agamben (1998), argues that the *state of exception* creates a zone of indistinction in which the usual distinctions between legal and illegal, public and private, and other categories become blurred. Understanding the difference between the *state of exception* and the zone of indistinction is crucial for comprehending the complex realities of the camps as permanent conditions of exception, where the law is suspended and exceptional laws have become permanent.

Contemporary Figures of Heterotopias

Michel Agier (2012) employs the Foucauldian concept of *heterotopian* spaces to comprehend refugee camps. According to this concept, heterotopia refers to parallel spaces that keep undesired bodies inside, creating real utopian spaces outside, for example, in a jail (Foucault, 1967/2008). In contemporary society, refugee camps are a modern example of *heterotopian* spaces, representing an abnormal or undesirable segment of society (Agier, 2012). Agier (2012) proposes that the idea of the refugee camp as a *heterotopian* space where unwanted populations are confined and managed corresponds to the notion of the ghetto. However, Agier (2012) goes beyond previous literature that predominantly views the ghetto through an ethnic or religious lens, as depicted by Flint (2009), Wahid (2019), and Bryant & Hatay (2011), by proposing a de-

centered approach. He contends that the ghetto should be examined "from the point of view of its relationship to the city and its distance from the state" (Agier, 2012, p. 265).

Agier (2012) conducted extensive research in various contexts, including Palestine, France, and Turkey, and makes a strong observation about refugee camps as exceptional spaces, where—in contrast to other spaces in cities—individuals are segregated and "distanced from the state" (Ζήση, 2021, p. 40). Agier (2012) observes that camps and ghettos are interconnected phenomena because both are distanced from the state and connected to the refugee experience, so they are part of a global matrix of oppressed spaces. One example that highlights this is the Kula camp, which was established by Liberian immigrants in Kailahun who were not recognized as refugees by the UNHCR. Through their perseverance, they managed to transform their temporary settlements into recognized districts, named "Kula camp" (Agier, 2012, p. 271). However, the physical structure of the camps, such as their grid pattern and barbed wire fences, coupled with the management style of both the host government and aid organizations, contributes to the creation of ghettos (Agier, 2012). This perpetuates a social construct that segregates the camp from the rest of the city (through restrictions imposed on freedom of mobility) (Agier, 2012). Agier (2012) clarifies that the reason behind the spatial segregation of refugee camps from the rest of the city is the host government's attempt to maintain a sense of heterotopia by isolating "abnormal" spaces at the periphery, which is reminiscent of the way favelas are marginalized.

Agier's perspective on the development of camps centers on the impact of state policies in determining their definition and evolution. However, as in the case of the Liberian immigrants,

Agier does not consider the inhabitants of camps as inactive. Nonetheless, the author places the emphasis on camps as sites of oppression, and as Demoor (2014) notes, it is important to be cautious when using terms like "ghettos," as they may reinforce harmful stereotypes that diminish refugees' actual abilities (Demoor, 2014) and can contribute to their further marginalization and suffering. For Agier (2012), refugees are:

> “excluded from the native places they lost through displacement, and they are excluded from the space of the ‘local population’ where the camps or other transit zones are located” (p. 278).

Demoor (2014) argues that Agier's analysis is overly broad and fails to account for the distinct experiences of various subgroups within the displaced population, such as internally displaced refugees. This results in a homogenization of their experiences and limits an analysis of the different ways that refugees construct—rather than are merely constructed by—space.

Abject Spaces

Isin and Rygiel (2007) expand upon Agamben's ideas by introducing the concept of *abject spaces*. They suggest that while Agamben's theory of the *state of exception* is useful, it does not fully capture the complexities of contemporary marginalized spaces, including frontiers, special economic zones, and detention camps. Isin and Rygiel (2007) characterize *abject spaces* as areas that are shamed or ignored, and are viewed as unclean, undesirable, and unimportant. These spaces are commonly associated with marginalized communities such as refugees, migrants, minorities, and homeless individuals. Isin and Rygiel (2007) show how the contemporary refugee camp functions as both a physical and symbolic manifestation of inequality and marginalization by examining its social and spatial dynamics.

In abject spaces, the fundamental rights and liberties of its occupants are significantly curtailed. The authors suggest that individuals residing in these spaces are not considered as either subjects or objects, but are rather rendered invisible, devoid of both potential and existing citizenship. According to Isin and Rygiel (2007), authorities of hosting settings have used silencing strategies against refugees by denying them citizenship, effectively preventing them from accessing certain rights. Unlike how Agamben perceives camps, Isin and Rygiel argue that refugees living in *abject spaces* are not mere passive victims. Rather, they are active political agents who employ diverse forms of resistance practices. These resistance practices can include protests, hunger strikes, sit-ins, and other direct actions (Isin & Rygiel, 2007). Even though refugees act politically, they are rightless (Isin & Rygiel, 2007). In effect, their political activism serves as a means to obtain rights, indicating that refugees are fighting for their rights (Isin & Rygiel, 2007).

The authors show how refugees have been able to use these silencing strategies to their benefit. According to Isin and Rygiel (2007), there was an incident in which an Iranian refugee utilized his body as a means of political resistance against Dutch asylum laws by sewing his lips and eyelids shut. By doing so, the refugee used his physical body, which is often referred to as 'bare life,' as a vehicle for expressing a political act of resistance. The act of suturing his lips and eyelids was a symbolic representation of how the government's strategies to silence him had stripped him of his subjectivity and basic human rights. While this example demonstrates the potential for agency, it remains highly symbolic, with refugees illustrating the extent of their confinement rather than an ability to shape their camp spaces anew. In essence, *abject spaces*, as Isin & Rygiel (2007) describe, refer to "camps as states of inexistence that function as reserves in which

subjects and their rights are suspended temporarily, in transition from one subjecthood to another" (p. 196).

Reviewing the relevant literature has shown the limits of existing perspectives on refugee camps. While existing studies provide insight into the structural factors that can circumscribe the space and can render the refugees within camps as subordinate within power hierarchies, they are less useful for understanding the *evolution* of the spatial order within a given context and the role of refugees within it. What applies for one case does not necessarily work for another. Refugee camps and other similar spaces have a latent potential for agency and transformation, beyond (and in spite) of their boundaries. This chapter seeks to make use of *policy mobility* literature as an instructive lens to analyze divergent forms of camp development as *assemblages* carried out by UNRWA and others, as will be analyzed in this study. Although UNRWA policy was meant to act as a unified form of management followed in all Palestine refugee camps, the results on the ground varied from camp to camp. Hence, the study argues that the same policy can produce outcomes that are both similar and dissimilar.

3.3. Methodology

In order to go beyond a limited and non-dynamic portrayal of refugee camps, as shown in the literature review section, this study uses *assemblage* theory as the methodological approach. This theory emphasizes meta-spatial flows (i.e., human and non-human, material and non-material, tangible and intangible) that can transcend camp boundaries. Applying this logic to the case studies of Palestinian camps in Jordan helps trace the networks and connections that constitute these camps beyond the limits of previous explorations of this topic. By moving from

depictions of camps as static or bounded entities to an analysis of the dynamic connections and power relations that continue to shape Palestinian camps today, a unique understanding emerges. In this pursuit, I also draw on *policy mobility* literature to inform an analysis of the divergent forms of camp development as *assemblages*.

The methods I employ in this chapter are two-fold: spatial and experiential. For spatial analysis, I employ archival research methods, including the use of satellite images and maps provided by the archive of the Royal Jordanian Geographic Center, which are used to track changes in growth and urbanization in the selected camps. An examination of unpublished documents, studies and guidelines from the UNRWA archives add further depth to this study of the camps' evolution over time.

In terms of experiential analysis, the work draws from an ethnographic approach, which encompasses interviews with key actors, direct observation, and graphic journaling. I conducted fieldwork between November 2021 and April 2022 in three Palestinian camps (Al-Husn, Talbiyeh, and Baqa'a) in Jordan. This approach provides first-hand accounts of the contemporary situation in the camps and is aided by the participation of first-generation refugees in semi-structured interviews, providing valuable information about camps across different phases. The experiences and perspectives shared by the first-generation refugees offered a rich and nuanced understanding of the historical context, social dynamics, and changes within camps over time. I also conducted semi-structured interviews with key actors (UNRWA, Department of Palestinian Affairs members). By engaging with these key actors, the study aimed to incorporate their perspectives and experiences, thus providing a balanced and comprehensive view of the camp's development and governance. The benefits of the semi-structured interview is that it provides

some structure to the themes posed across the different settings but it incorporates flexibility in terms of order and inclusion of questions, and includes an open-ended format that allows the respondents to freely express themselves (Bryman et al., 2021).

In order to analyze the data collected, I use various methods. I present the data in the interviews in the form of excerpts (or vignettes), using the method developed by Emerson et al. (2011). I employ this method to prioritize the voices of key actors. First, a theme or concept is introduced, followed by a brief overview of the interview excerpt or fieldnote. Then, a direct quote from the interview or fieldnotes is provided to highlight the key actor's perspective. Finally, an analysis of the excerpt is presented, incorporating additional observations, personal reflections, or relevant literature. I also analyze data using visual representations such as sketches, diagrams and AutoCAD drawings. A mix of methods allows for a cross-referencing of findings from different sources.

In the following analysis, I explore how UNRWA intended for an overarching model to be followed uniformly in all its camps and how this model's implementation deviated from expectations (Hanafi et al., 2014).

3.4. Analysis: Camp Evolution and UNRWA Policy

This section explores questions related to Palestinian refugee camps and their relation to UNRWA construction and shelter policy over time. After the 1967 Six-Day War, UNRWA envisioned a model to be applied to all Palestinian camps in Jordan. However, refugee camps that resulted from this plan were ultimately not the same. To demonstrate how the same policy could result in distinctive camps, I explore three case studies in Jordan: Baqa'a, Talbiyeh, and Al-Husn refugee

camps. I outline the context of these case studies, highlighting historical key events that have affected the evolution of the camps. The evolution of the camps is compared by tracing the logic of their urban growth over time. Next, I examine the key factors responsible for the camps' evolution, allowing for an understanding of the origins of the differences between the camps. I conclude by

3.4.1. The UNRWA-Envisioned Model: Camp Layout

All Palestinian refugee camps started as tented camps constructed by UNRWA, with tents distributed diffusely across the camp space with no planned pattern or order. As these tents proved unable to withstand extreme weather conditions, UNRWA sought to develop another plan to operate the camp more effectively and efficiently—an overarching, easy-to-control layout for all camps under its supervision. The plan was to have a regulated humanitarian space with a grid format composed of clusters of equal shelter units. These units were built by UNRWA for refugees as part of a 96 m^2 plot given to each refugee family. A number of plots were grouped together in rectangular blocks, separated by either main or secondary streets. In addition, public washrooms, health clinics, schools, and UNRWA distribution centers with public water tanks were included in the planned layout (UNRWA CIP document, 2012). This was how most of the camps began (see Figure 3) with the exception of Talbiyeh camp, where some differences were applied due to grant-related reasons that will be explained later (in section 3.4.3).

Figure 4 shows the design of housing blocks installed in Palestinian camps using 3D drawings created in AutoCAD based on information provided by UNRWA's archives. These diagrams depict

housing units, block units, and the master plan of one block unit, displaying the UNRWA model (to the right) and the special case of Talbiyeh camp installed via an Iranian grant (to the left).

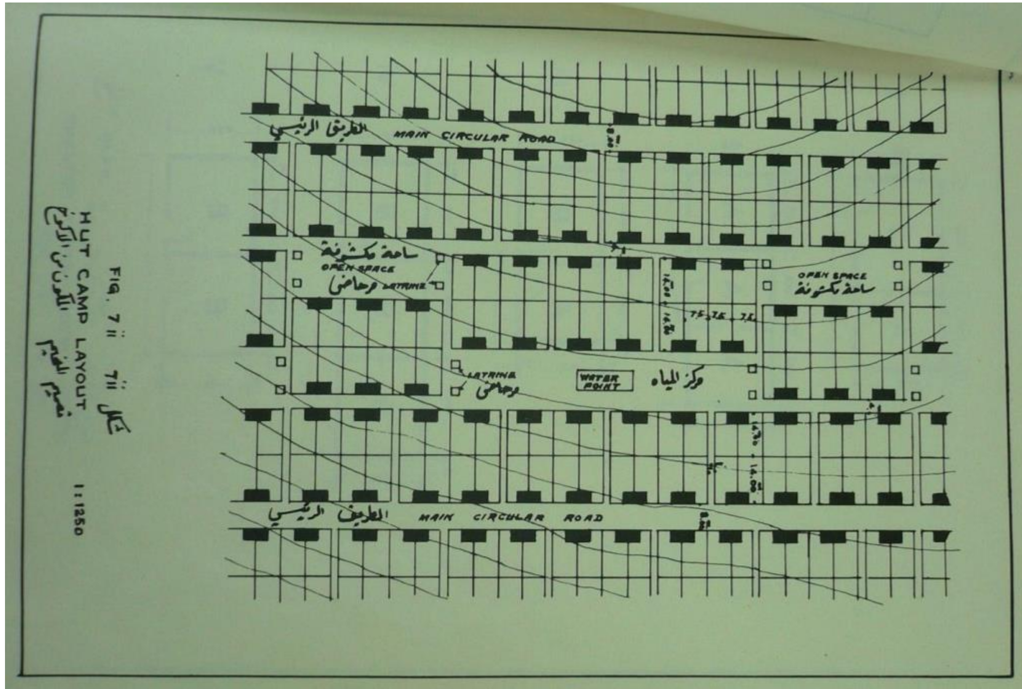


Figure 3. UNRWA camp layout taken from UNRWA Central Registry archive (Berg, 2015).

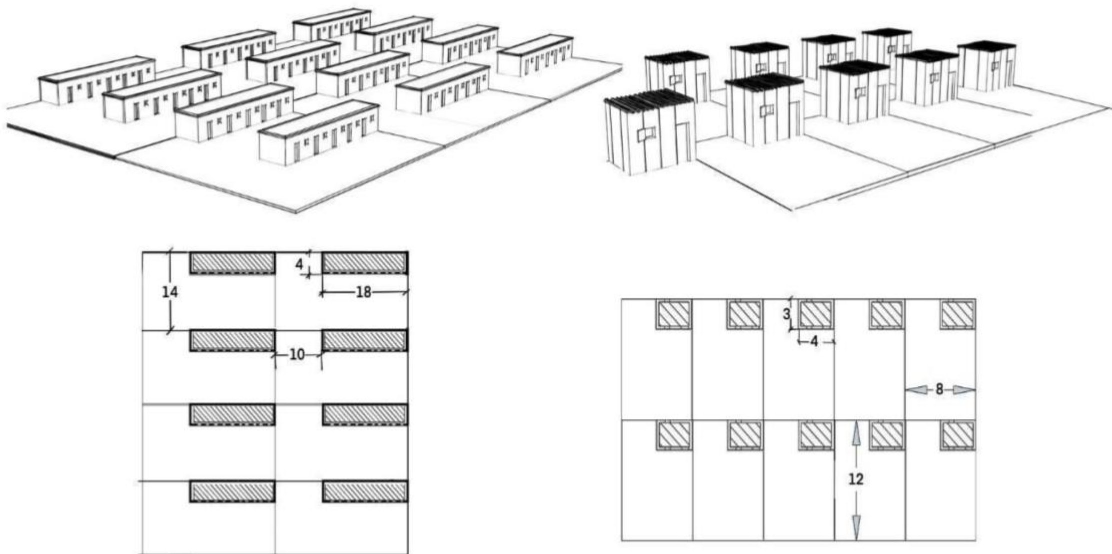


Figure 4. 3D drawings of Talbiyeh block unit and its master plan (left) and the UNRWA model of the block unit its master plan (right) (Alqub, 2022).

3.4.2. Case Study Context

Jordan, the location of these three case studies, is considered a safe zone amidst an otherwise war-torn area of the Middle East (see Figure 5). It occupies an area of 89,342 square kilometers with a population of 10 million. It is bordered by Palestine to the west, Iraq to the east, Saudi Arabia to the east and south and Syria to the north (Department of Statistics, 2020).[13] I selected Jordan as the study area due to its prolonged history of hosting refugee camps from various nations, providing substantial opportunity to study refugee camps and the different associations these spaces reflect. Palestinian refugee camps in Jordan were first established in 1950 (Tawil, 2009). Jordan also began to house Iraqi and Syrian refugees in 2003 and 2011 respectively. UNHCR recognizes Jordan as the second largest host of refugees per capita (Turnbull, 2019).

Figure 5. To the left, a map of Jordan shows its location in relation to the rest of the world. To the right, a close-up map of Jordan (Map of Jordan, n.d.).

Palestinian refugees constitute 2 million of Jordan's total population of 10 million—the largest place of origin of refugees in Jordan. Along with Palestine's historical circumstances and cultural position in the region, this study focuses on Palestinian refugee camps established in Jordan after the 1967 Six-Day War, referred to as emergency camps. The Jordanian government, along with UNRWA, established six emergency camps in 1968 in Jordan. Although UNRWA had prior experience in camp construction, significant differences in size, location, and construction strategy resulted in a much different experience than during the construction of the post-1948 camps (Hanafi et al., 2014). Figure 6 displays the locations of the official Palestinian camps in Jordan.

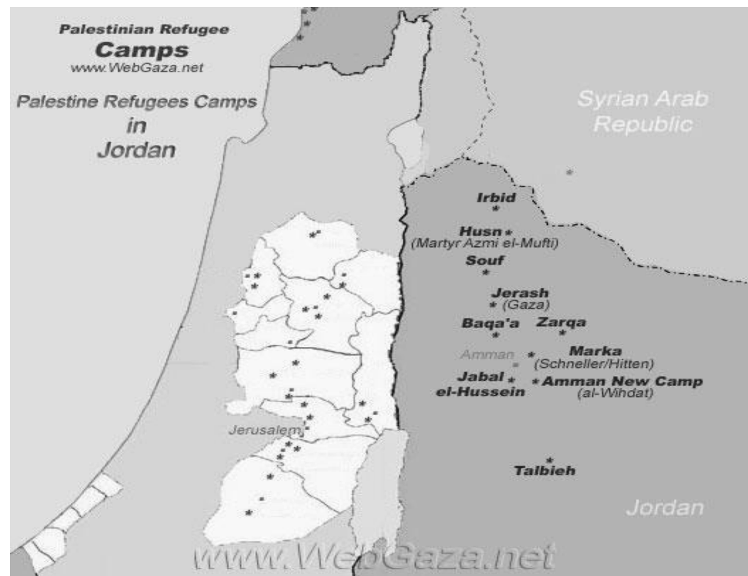


Figure 6. a map of the locations of official Palestinian camps in Jordan (WebGaza, 2006).

3.4.2.1. Case studies: Camp Profiles, Comparisons, and Beyond

The three cases selected for this study are Al-Husn, Talbiyeh and Baqa'a refugee camps. Each is situated within a different geographical context. Al-Husn, Talbiyeh and Baqa'a refugee camps are

located in Irbid, southern Amman, and Amman, respectively. This section provides a brief profile of each case followed by comparative analysis and a discussion of key themes.

Al-Husn Camp Profile

Also known as 'Azmi al-Mufti' camp, Al-Husn is an emergency camp set up in 1968 for 12,500 Palestinian refugees following the 1967 Arab-Israeli War (see Figure 7). It is located 80 km north of Amman, near the city of Irbid, on an area of 0.77 km^2. Irbid city has the second largest metropolitan population in Jordan after Amman and is considered a major ground transportation hub between Amman and Syria to the north and Mafraq to the east. The land on which the camp is placed is considered fertile agricultural land with a sloping topography. According to DPA documents (2022), the camp currently has a population of approximately 22,000 registered Palestinian refugees. According to a study conducted in 2011 in Al-Husn camp, the total population residing in the camp was approximately 17,000, of which 30% are unregistered. This indicates that the number of camp residents announced by authorities does not necessarily reflect the actual population of the camp (see Figure 8).[14]

Figure 7. A photo displays a panoramic view of Al-Husn camp, Irbid, Jordan (Alqub, 2022).

4.1 Household members registration status as refugee.

Q29: Registration status as refugee.

Table 25 Distribution of HHs members according to registration status as refugee.

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Registered	11866	70.0	70.2	70.2
Unregistered	5038	29.7	29.8	100.0
Total	16904	99.7	100.0	
Missing	49	.3		
Total	**16953**	**100.0**		

- This table shows that the total population distributed at 70.2%-registered refugees and 29.8% unregistered.
- Un registered almost are Displaced people, Local Jordanian or immigrant worker.

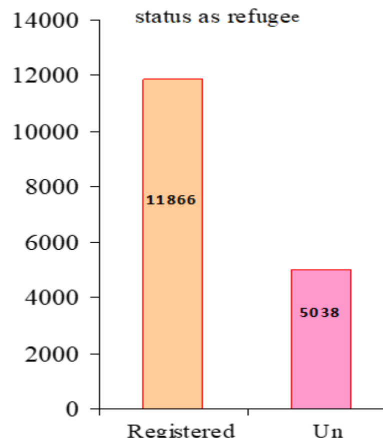


Figure 8. percentage of registered and unregistered refugees in Al-Husn camp (UNRWA archives, 2012).

Talbiyeh Camp Profile

Talbiyeh camp is the smallest Palestinian camp in Jordan under UNRWA supervision in terms of population (UNRWA, 2022). It was also established as an emergency camp in 1968. The camp is also known as “Zezia” and covers an area of 0.13 km^2. It initially accommodated 5000 refugees, but its population has since grown to 10,000 (UNRWA, 2022). Talbiyeh camp is located 35 km south of the city of Amman, close to Jordan’s primary airport, Queen Alia Airport (see Figure 9). This closeness to the airport, which made the camp isolated from the rest of the city of Amman, also caused structural issues, as vibrations from air traffic weakened camp foundations in sandy soil (Vendermeulen & Vangronsveld, 2012).

Figure 9. An arial view shows Talbiyeh camp and its surrounding for the year 2022 (RJGC archives, 2022).

Baqa'a Camp Profile

Baqa'a is the largest Palestinian refugee camp in Jordan (see Figure 10). It was set up as one of the six emergency camps in 1968, after Israeli raids of its previous location had increasingly compromised refugee safety and worsened living conditions. Baqa'a camp is located 20 km north of Amman and contains 104,000 registered refugees (Palestinian Refugees in Jordan, n.d.).[15] It covers an area of 1.4 km^2 with public services such as schools, a women's center, a rehabilitation center, and markets. These services were planned by UNRWA through an overarching model to be applied in all Palestinian camps, in an effort to provide a sense of order and consistency to these spaces. Figure 11 shows maps of Al-Husn, Talbiyeh, and Baqa'a camps, illustrating their

location in relation to urban centers, while Figures 12-14 display maps tracking the origin cities of refugees residing in these camps.

Figure 10. An arial view shows Baqa'a camp and its context (RJGC archives, 2022).

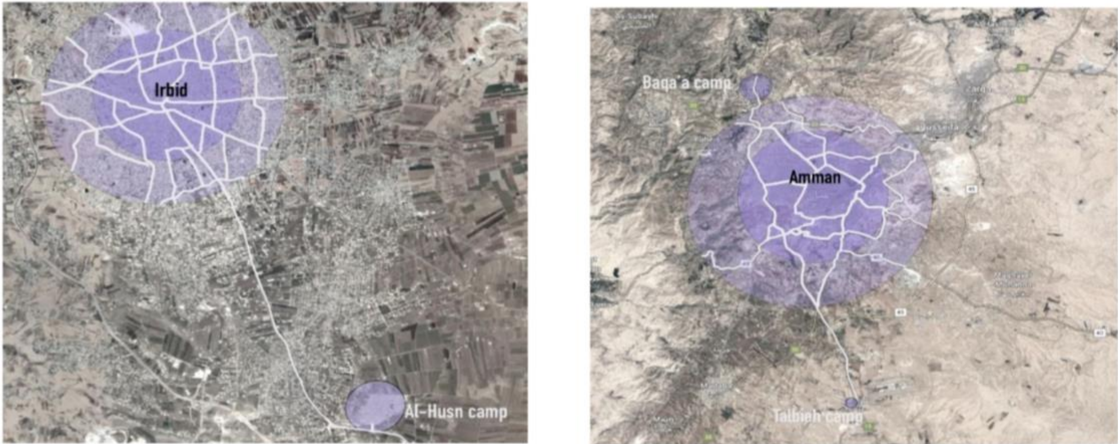


Figure 11. To the left, a map of Al-Husn camp and its location in relation to Irbid urban center. To the right, a map shows the location of Baqa'a and Talbiyeh camps in relation to the urban center of Amman (Alqub, 2022).

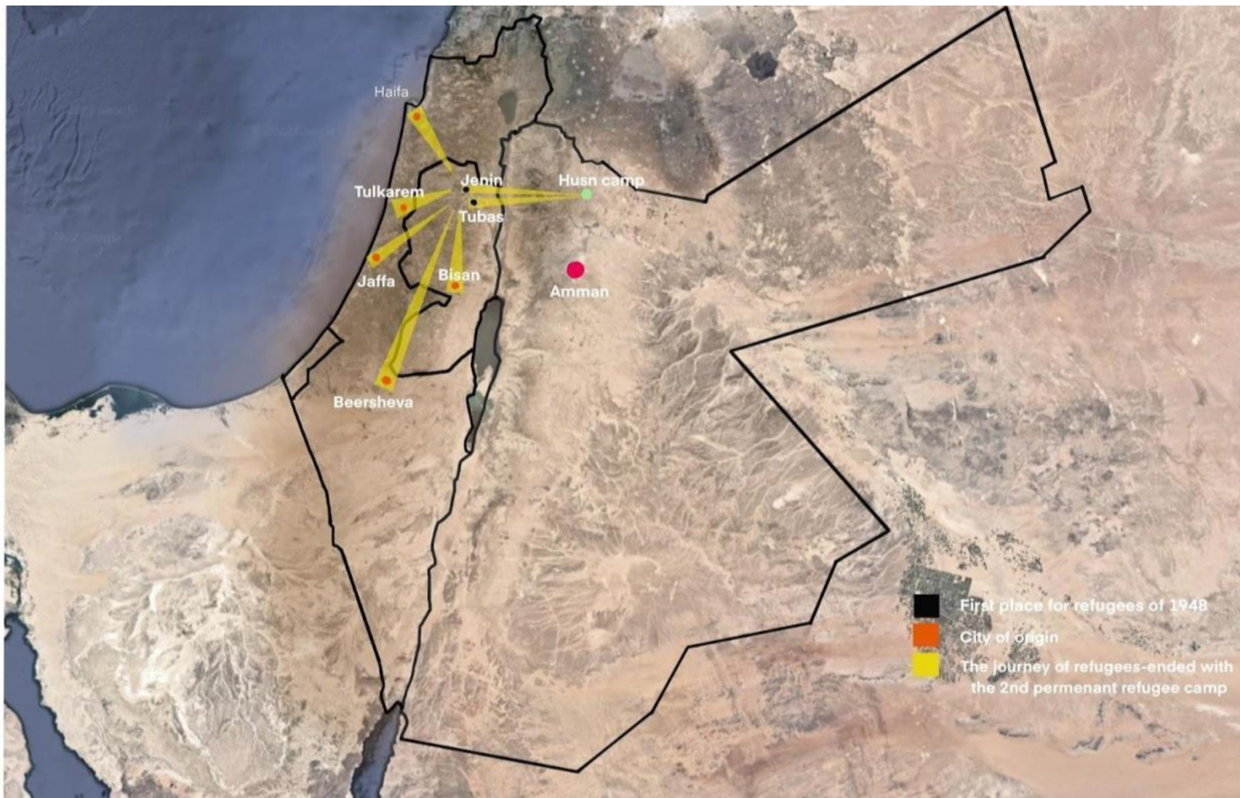


Figure 12. a map tracking the origin cities of refugees residing in Al-Husn camp (Alqub, 2022).

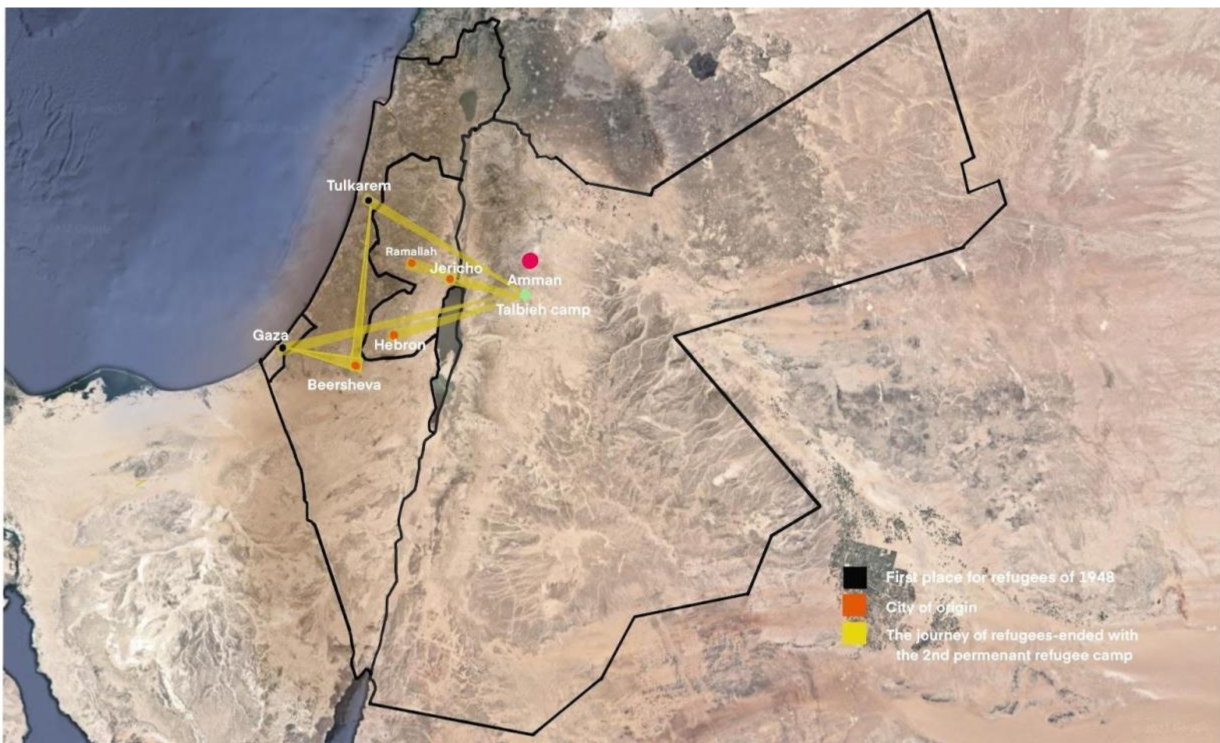


Figure 13. a map tracking the origin cities of refugees residing in Talbiyeh camp (Alqub, 2022).

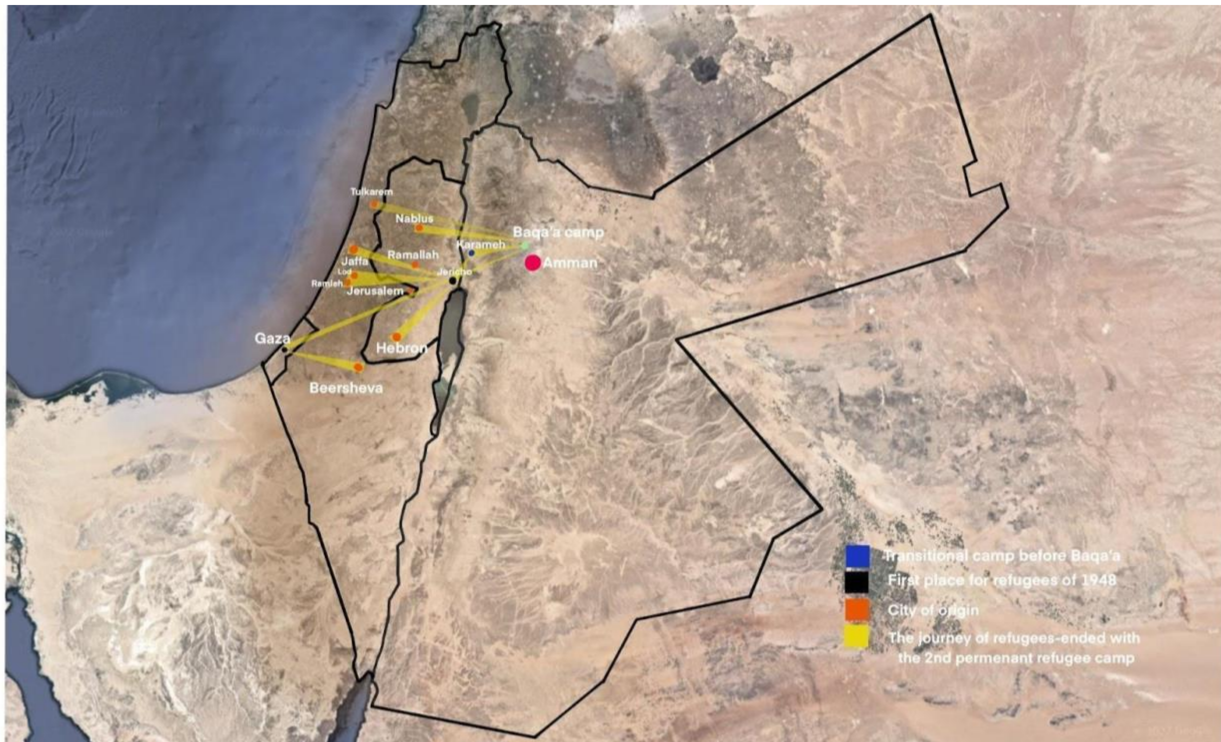


Figure 14. a map tracking the origin cities of refugees residing in Baqa'a camp (Alqub, 2022).

In the next section, I trace the different stages of urban growth experienced by these camps, connecting their morphological transformations to social, geo-political, political economic, and geological/physical geographical factors.

3.4.3 Camp Evolution

Before UNRWA changed its policy from using tents in 1967 to building more durable settlements, the three camps studied in this section went through several key events that drove this change in policy. After the tents had been turned into barracks (prefabricated shelters), continuous transformations have taken place, highlighting a clear urbanization process driven by refugees. In this section, I analyze the logic of urban growth for the three camps using aerial maps obtained from the archives of the Royal Jordanian Geographic Center (RJGC) covering the years 1978,

1992, and 2022. I draw connections between the camps' construction process (expressed morphologically/physically) and implicit determinants/dynamics uncovered based on archival research, unpublished UNRWA documents, a historical review of key events, and interviews conducted with refugees residing in the three camps and DPA & UNRWA staff members. By doing so, I reveal the differences between the three cases. First, the urban growth of the camps is traced (morphologically) through the use of RJGC aerial photos; then an analysis of global networks, physical geography, and socio-cultural dynamics that impact the camps follows.

3.4.3.1. Dynamics of Camp Urban Growth

Through the lens of *assemblage* theory, I follow the urban growth of the three case studies contextualized with UNRWA archival documents and interviews conducted with camps' residents, and DPA and UNRWA staff members. In doing so, the study uncovers connections between morphological changes in camp evolution and networks of physical geography, geo-politics, political economy, and socio-cultural dynamics. Figures 15-17 demonstrate camp growth for the years 1978, 1992, and 2022 for each case study.

Al-Husn camp was initially built using the UNRWA model. The area chosen for this case was large compared to the number of refugees inhabiting it.

Due to its large size, refugees were able to expand outwards while remaining within t camp limits as of 1992.

This map shows the current situation of Al-Husn camp, illustrating its overcrowded ness. An examination of camp boundaries reveals minor instances of construction beyond the designated limits. However, the predominant pattern in the camp's development is vertical expansion, as numerous structures have grown to two or three stories in height. Also, the agricultural nature of the land was a blessing for refugees, who planted large areas of the surrounding lands (shown in green and brown), benefiting from it economically.

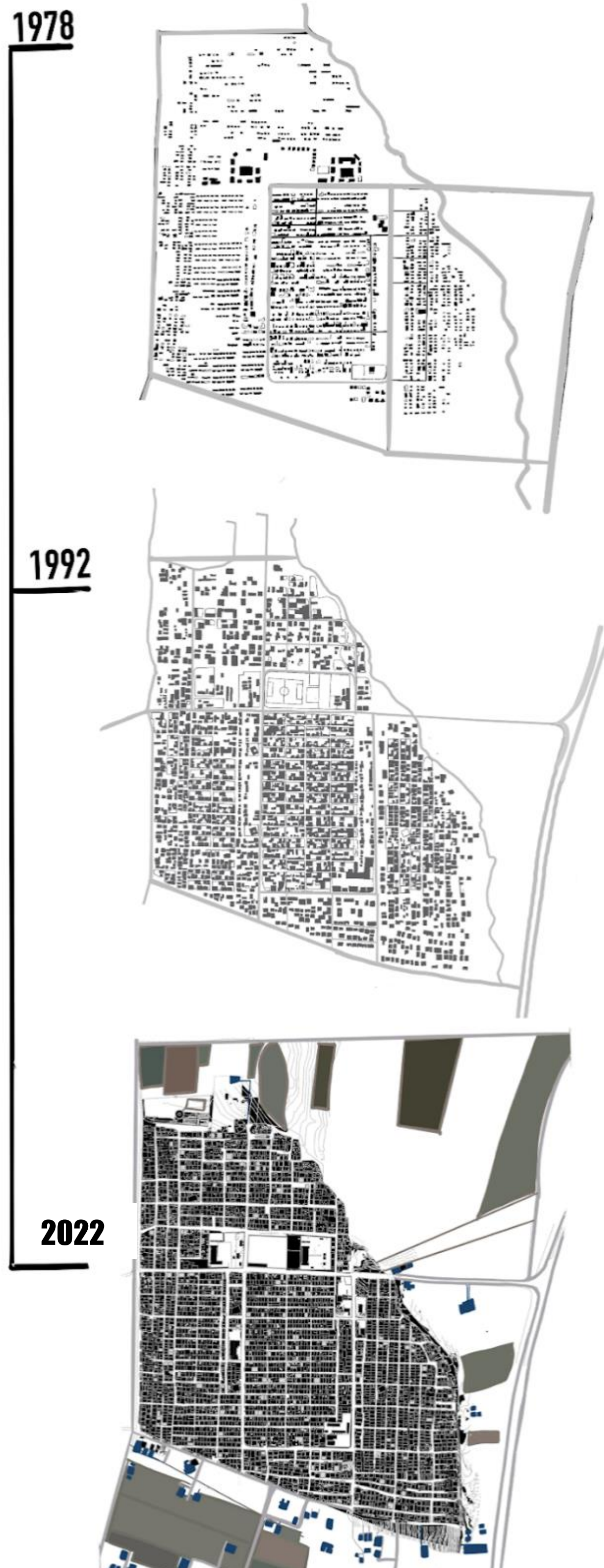
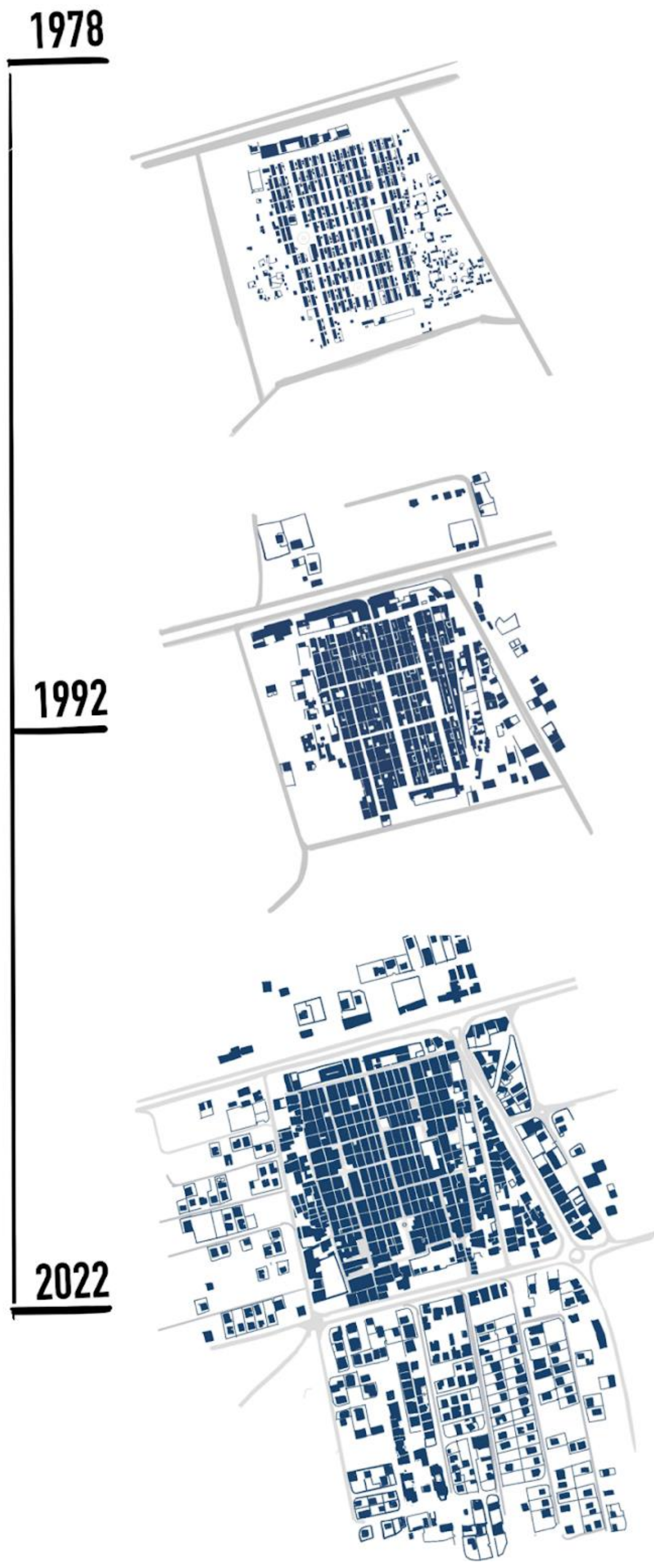


Figure 15. Al-Husn camp growth for the years 1978, 1992, and 2022 (Alqub, 2022).

Initially, there were only 5000 refugees in Talbiyeh camp. Although the barracks were limited in size, the camp included a significant open, outdoor space, which was best suited for the nature of the Bedouin people, who traditionally live in open desert space and who make up most of Talbiyeh's residents.



In 1992, horizontal expansion of the camp took place at the expense of its open, outdoor areas. This shift resulted in overcrowding in the already-small camp, forcing Bedouin residents to leave the camp area to settle at the edges of the camp, mainly to comport with cultural practices, such as living in open, uncrowded, and more gender segregated spaces.

Currently, the number of settlements outside camp boundaries have increased significantly. It is known as The Western neighborhood of the camp is inhabited primarily by Bedouin. There, homes are larger in area and include an internal courtyard, ensuring residents' privacy. The fragile foundation of Iranian housing units prevents refugees from vertically expanding.

Figure 16. Talbiyeh camp growth (evolution) for the years 1978, 1992, 2022 (Alqub, 2022).

In 1978, the 96 m^2 area given to each family by the UNRWA at Baqa'a camp was fenced by block walls and roofed by zinc roofing. The camp's entire area was occupied by living space.

In 1992, Baqa'a camp experienced horizontal growth within its official boundaries. At this point, vertical growth was prohibited.

By 2022, Baqa'a camp's streets had been paved. The camp had sharply vertically expanded (3-4 stories). Horizontal expansion also occurred, although outside camp boundaries. However, horizontal expansion took place slightly compared to the sharp vertical expansion.

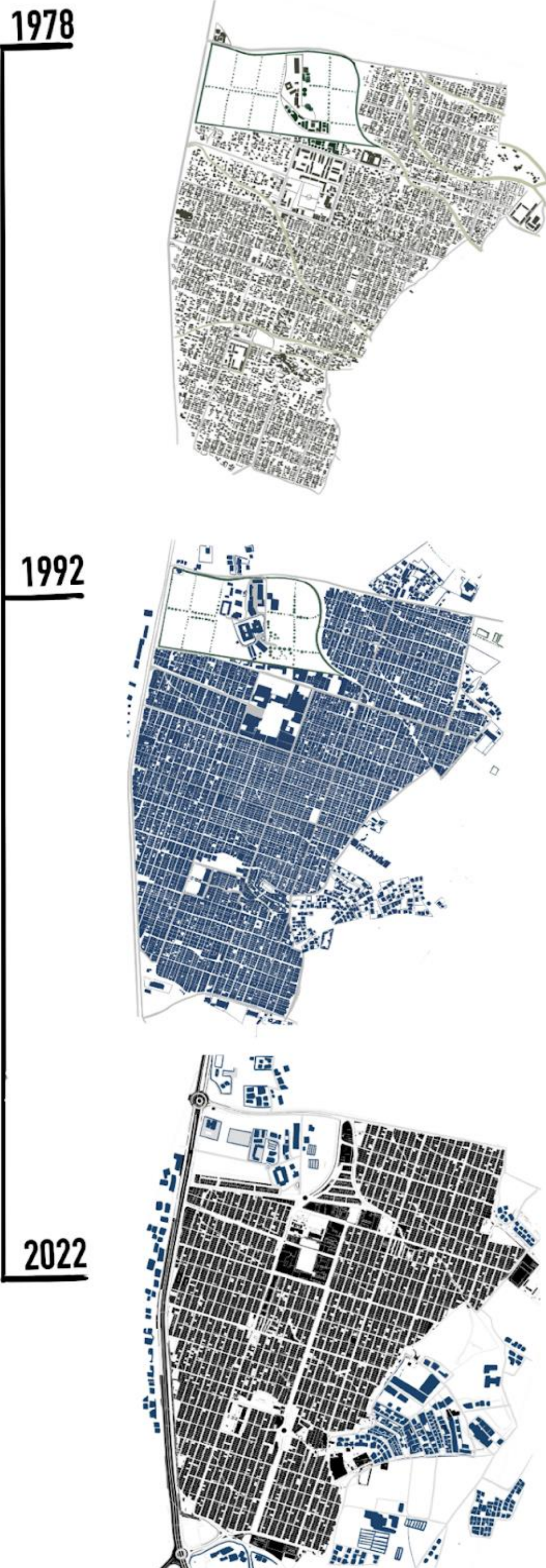


Figure 17. Baqa'a camp growth (evolution) for the years 1978, 1992, 2022 (Alqub, 2022)

In summary, these maps show the difference in morphological growth for the three camps. A number of factors influenced camp growth in each case. These determinants are the themes through which the camps' evolution as *assemblages* will be studied in the coming sections.

Camp Evolution and Physical Geography

The geographical characteristics of campsites—or 'non-human actants' to *assemblage* proponents (Dovey, 2010)—affect the way they evolve over time (CIP UNRWA documents, 2012). The environmental traits of campsites can either encourage or inhibit camp evolution. As Jordan is geographically diverse, the campsites in each case study differ accordingly. Baqa'a and Al-Husn were both placed on agricultural lands. However, Baqa'a was located in a depressed, flat valley while Al-Husn was located on land with sloping topography, bordered by a valley to the south. Being lower in height compared to surrounding land, Baqa'a camp's location created a physical barrier to the horizontal expansion of the camp (along with administrative boundaries).

Similarly, the valley towards the southeast border of Al-Husn camp acted as a buffer to horizontal expansion. The sloping topography of the site was used by refugees as a way to harvest water for agricultural needs. This topographical condition encouraged refugees to expand vertically in order to maximize sunlight, as the sloping landscape would leave some single-story structures largely in shadow, unlike camps located on flat land, such as Baqa'a.

By contrast, Talbiyeh camp is located on sandy, flat land. Its flatness made it possible for Talbiyeh residents to expand horizontally. It should be noted that any horizontal expansion outside the demarcated boundaries of the camp was not recognized by UNRWA or the DPA. However, in this

study, I put these administrative exclusions aside, and follow camp growth regardless of regulatory definitions that ignore the full urban evolution of the camp. From an engineering point of view, sandy lands are not recommended for multi-floor buildings. These foundations are not as strong as those located on rocky land, for instance. Therefore, Talbiyeh camp is known for its fragile foundations that were not intended to bear additional floors. This pushed refugees to move to the edges of the camp and expand horizontally. Along with this factor, other broader factors that will be explored in the following section impacted camp evolution.

Camp Evolution and Global Networks

The locations of Palestinian refugee campsites were determined by the Jordanian government and placed on lands rented for 99 years by Jordanian citizens (landowners) to UNRWA (Maqusi, 2021). The choice of the campsites was not a spontaneous act, as each camp has a story behind its location. As Palestinian refugee camps are a result of geopolitical factors, the selection of the camps' location is accordingly saturated with politics (see Figure 18).

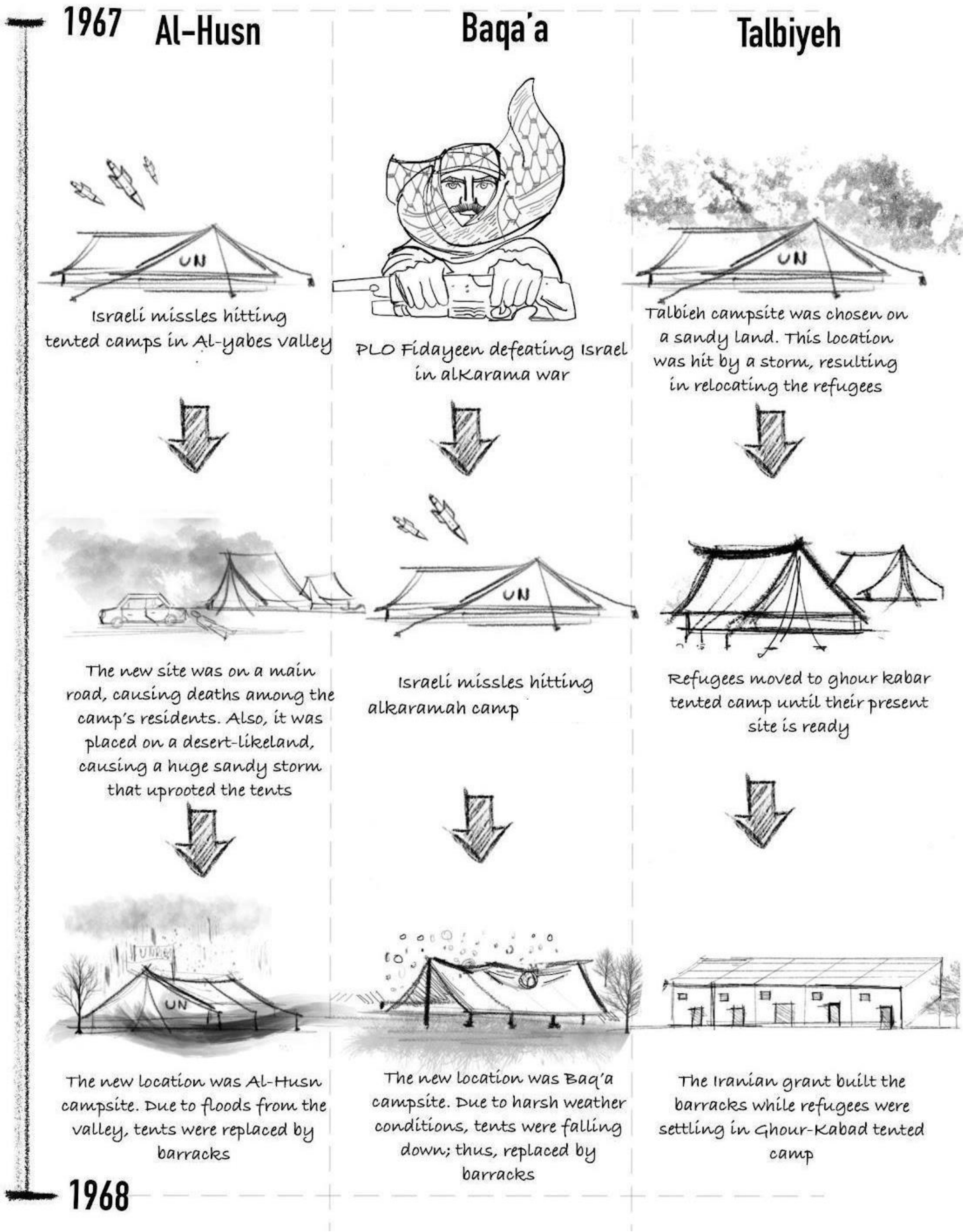


Figure 18. The historical key events that drove UNRWA to shift to the new semi-permanent plan instead of tents in the three case studies (Alqub, 2022).

Tracing each camp's contextual history uncovers networks at work during each phase of construction. The site of Baqa'a camp, located 20 km to the north of Jordan's capital city, Amman, was intended for an army base or a prison (Maqusi, 2021). Its location in a "depressed valley," exposed in all directions, made it the best choice for the Jordanian government's efforts to control and confine an exceptional political space. Refugees who went to Baqa'a previously resided in Al-Karamah camp and Maddi camp, tented camps along the Jordan Valley, near the Palestinian-Jordanian border, following the 1967 Six-Day War. In these locations, *Fidayeen,*[16] resistance fighters from the Palestinian Liberation Organization (PLO), had been organizing themselves into a militant resistance movement in order to attack Israel. With the help of the Jordanian army, PLO fighters were able to defeat Israel in the Battle of Al-Karamah. Israeli raids were launched on Al-Karamah camp, killing between 150 and 200 residents and destroying 175 dwellings (Morris, 1999). The Jordanian government viewed *Fedayeen* as posing a threat to its sovereignty, especially given the large amount of support they received from Arabs and Palestinian refugees residing in Jordan and the region, recognizing them as a state inside the Jordanian state (Hanafi et al., 2014). To dismantle the PLO in Jordan as soon as possible, there was an urgent need to find a ready-made site that was controllable and manageable. The site that eventually housed Baqa'a camp was a perfect fit, with the required spatial qualities necessary for confinement and control. Therefore, refugees in Al-Karamah camp were moved to Baqa'a camp, away from the borders and closer to authorities' eyes. In 1970, PLO *Fedayeen* moved to Lebanon, leaving Jordan in the wake of Black *September* (see Endnote 6), a conflict between the Jordanian armed forces and PLO fighters also referred to as the Jordanian Civil War.

In comparing Baqa'a with the locations of Al-Husn and Talbiyeh camps, it is clear how Baqa'a was intended from the beginning to be integrated within the local urban fabric (see Figure 6). According to interviews with stakeholders in Baqa'a camp, the proximity of the camp to the capital gave it a special position compared to the rest of the Palestinian refugee camps in Jordan. It has thrived as a commercial hub, as many businesses pay high prices to operate stores inside the camp. As this camp proved to be financially lucrative, UNRWA and the DPA built commercial units, even though refugees were in need of new residential units and repairs to existing residential units (U. Jadallah, personal communication, Baqa'a camp, January 5th, 2022).

Meanwhile, both Al-Husn and Talbiyeh were located on much smaller, isolated plots of land. They were also further from urban centers and employment opportunities than Baqa'a camp. The views of one interviewee from Al-Husn camp align Hanafi et al. (2014) regarding the choice of the Al-Husn and Talbiyeh campsites, namely that one of the reasons for their location is that refugee camps had always been seen as "undesirable" spaces or as a burden to the surrounding area. Refugees would be depicted as passive figures, relying on the surrounding area's already limited resources. Thus, "isolation" could be seen as a strategy to encourage refugees to be self-supporting (M. Tubasi, personal communication, Al-Husn, November 30th, 2021). UNRWA's annual reports support this claim, as they have often encouraged self-help initiatives and refugee-led projects (UNRWA, 1980, 1981, 1982)

This analysis reveals a convergence between geopolitical and political economic factors. According to M. Khdur (DPA member in Al-Husn camp, personal communication, November 30th, 2021), even though Palestinian camps were established for geopolitical reasons, they were also seen as economic opportunities in which an enormous number of powerless refugees are

confined together on a demarcated plot of land, having no option but to make this new place a home. Establishing work and training programs was seen as a future target since the establishment of UNRWA as The United Nations Relief and *Works* Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East, demonstrating the institution's intention to have Palestinian refugees work in the host countries, aiming to integrate them into the economies of the regions in which they are situated. This example has illustrated how political economic incentives shape refugee camps, with UNRWA employing tens of thousands of Palestinian refugees in host countries as teachers, doctors, engineers, street cleaners, etc. (Bocco, 2009).

However, recent statistics show how UNRWA has come to reduce the "works" part of its mandate. The study below, conducted in Al-Husn camp in 2010, shows the percentage of refugees by employment sector, with the percentage of refugees employed by UNRWA itself at around only 2% (CIP UNRWA documents, 2012) (see Figure 19).

Q50: Sector of work

Table 49 Distribution of employed persons Age 15+ year by sector of work

	Frequency	Valid Percent
Governmental	827	23.3
Private sector	2556	71.9
Un profit institutions	5	.1
UNRWA	75	2.1
0ther international organizations	90	2.5
Total	**3553**	**100.0**

- The results show that 71.9% of the total employed work in the private sector, while 23.3% work in the governmental sector.

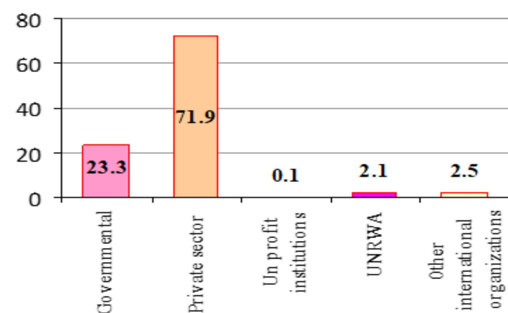


Figure 19. a diagram that shows the percentage of refugees (employed persons) by sectors of work in Al-Husn camp (UNRWA archives, 2012).

The chart above aligns with the words of H. Mawali from Al-Husn camp, who said that UNRWA was meant to provide work for Palestinian refugees. Currently, it employs many non-refugees, disavowing itself from commitments to employ Palestinian refugees. A recent example can be seen in Jordan, where a reduction in refugee street cleaners employed by UNRWA resulted in uncontrollable environmental degradation and health hazards in such dense spaces (H. Mawali, Personal communication, Al-Husn camp, November 30th, 2021).

In the case of Al-Husn camp, geopolitics worked hand in hand with political economic factors when the site was initially chosen. This point was most apparent when the "industrial cities" program in Jordan was established by the USA (Aly, 2018). More specifically, in 1996, industrial cities or Qualified Industrial Zones (QIZ), were established by an act of US congress with the aim of promoting the peace process in the Middle East (Saif, 2006). Under this initiative, Egypt and Jordan are permitted to export goods to the United States without incurring duties, provided that the products contain inputs sourced from Israel (Biemann, 2016). This initiative also claimed to provide job opportunities for refugees in Jordan (personal communication, Al-Husn, December 2021). Al-Hasan industrial city, where goods were produced for the Israeli market, presented a rare source of employment for Palestinian refugees in Al-Husn camp (Nuseibeh, 2023). Because of this, many refugees found themselves forced to work for the benefit of those responsible for their day-to-day suffering in camps. Al-Hasan industrial city includes more than 154 industries, with an investment volume exceeding 489.5 million Jordanian dinars.[17] This city has provided over 36,000 job opportunities for local workers, half of which are from Al-Husn camp. The products of this city are mainly textiles and garments, among other products called "unskilled

labor-intensive products" (Lord, 2001, p. 19). Lord (2001) provides a description of how this industrial zone works:

> "the Qualifying Industrial Zone (QIZ) scheme, which was formalized by the United States-Israel Free Trade Area Implementation Act (IFTA) of 1985. The system allows articles to be imported duty free into the United States that are produced in the West Bank, Gaza Strip and QIZs between Israel and Jordan and between Israel and Egypt… It also identifies goods processed in the zones for duty-free and quota-free entry into the United States if the products meet the requirement of adding value in the zones, Israel, the West Bank and Gaza Strip of no less than 35 percent of the total appraised value of the product." (Lord, 2001, p. viii)[18] Keeping in mind that 8% of the meeting value-added requirement must come from Israel (Lord, 2001, p.13).

The paragraph above sheds light on the political economic dimension of these industrial cities. For instance, Nuseibeh (2023) has referred to the establishment of such industrial zones in Jordan as part of a movement that Jordan took towards adopting neoliberal or market-oriented policies, where Jordan "has permitted the privatization of public services, [and] reduced barriers to foreign investment" (Nuseibeh, 2023, p. 48). Additionally, as previously mentioned, the US promoted the establishment of industrial cities in the Middle East as a means to ensure stability in the region (Saif, 2006). This highlights a clear connection between geopolitics and the neoliberal political economy agenda (Aly, 2018).

However, Talbiyeh camp was different from Al-Husn and other Palestinian camps in Jordan in terms of its construction due to the involvement of larger geopolitical networks. That is, the *Iranian Red Lion and Sun Society,*[19] a humanitarian organization affiliated with the Red Cross, provided financial backing to the construction of Talbiyeh camp, starting with tents, then their replacement by 810 prefabricated housing units for refugees residing in the camp (Vendermeulen & Vangronsveld, 2012). The Iranian grant, valued at around 2 million US dollars, paid for cement concrete walls and asbestos or zinc sheets for roofing in the camp. Each unit

(barrack) includes five rooms, each containing one family. This set a precedent for the rest of the camps in Jordan in terms of the materials used in housing units. However, the camp layout followed UNRWA's general plan, with some differences, mainly in terms of the construction material used, as materials used in Talbiyeh camp were more durable than those used in other UNRWA camps during the late 1960s. Also, the division of housing units was different in the barracks built by the Iranian grant than those constructed by UNRWA. With multiple families sharing each barrack, units at Talbiyeh lacked privacy when compared to Baqa'a and Al-Husn camps, where each family was afforded a separate unit with around 84 m² of outdoor space. However, the Talbiyeh barracks included larger outdoor spaces than these camps, compensating for the lack of indoor space (U. Jbarat, personal communication, Talbiyeh camp, January 1st, 2022).

These differences in construction process make Talbiyeh camp distinctive among camps. Yet, it still largely followed the main guidelines of UNRWA regarding layout. For instance, having blocks gathering a number of barracks and secondary streets as the main unit of housing along with the inclusion of shared facilities like washrooms, restaurants, UNRWA ration centers, clinics, and community centers (UNRWA unpublished documents, 2012). Similar to Al-Husn camp, Talbiyeh was also isolated from Amman's urban area. This resulted in UNRWA and the DPA encouraging self-help projects that utilized refugees as a workforce to build their own city with as few external resources as possible (M. Khdur, DPA member in Al-Husn camp, personal communication, November 30th, 2021).

Camp Evolution: Socio-cultural Factors and Refugees as Key Actors

Robinson (2009) has extensively addressed structural divisions within the Palestinian community. He distinguishes between *tribes, clans,* and *notable families* within the Palestinian population. According to Robinson (2009), the word *tribe* denotes the nomadic or semi-nomadic Bedouin population of Palestinian society and their descendants, while a *clan* refers to a group of extended interrelated families that share a common ancestor. Clans, or *Hamula* in Arabic, share peasant roots, or *Fallahi* in Arabic. *Notable families* are those who were politically active and prominent throughout Palestinian history. This part of Palestinian society is recognized as the "Urban elite" (Robinson, 2009, p.3) and is referred to in Arabic as *Madani*.

In this section, I seek to trace the implications of this structural framework on refugees in a camp context. This analysis aims to explore the contribution of refugees to the evolution of the camp over time, emphasizing their impact on the policy-making process of UNRWA. By examining the role of refugees in shaping the policies and practices of UNRWA, and accordingly the camp evolution, this section highlights the agency of refugees and their ability to affect change in their own spaces despite the structural and regulatory constraints they face.

When refugees first arrived at camps, they received tents from UNRWA to settle in temporarily. Refugees started to move their tents close to where their clans' or tribes' tents were placed. Ultimately, each tribe, clan, or people from the same city of origin gathered around each other, creating zones based on tribal affiliations or kinship. This did not disturb the peace of UNRWA camps but was instead actively encouraged by the agency (Maqusi, 2021). These familial structures helped UNRWA to organize and distribute refugees within the camp layout. For

instance, administrative work would be easier to handle and conduct in a space where the residents are socio-spatially organized and culturally similar. Also, less social and cultural friction would take place in more familiar surroundings. Thus, adopting this refugee-led organizational technique based on socio-cultural factors was the approach used by UNRWA whenever possible. This perspective adopted by UNRWA highlights the significant impact that refugees can have on the development and implementation of policies and practices by UNRWA. By providing insights into the experiences and needs of refugees, their contributions can shape the decisions made by UNRWA and ultimately influence the direction and effectiveness of their programs. To provide empirical evidence, the following analysis explores how UNRWA has reacted to refugees' newly established socio-cultural urban fabric in Baqa'a, Al-Husn, and Talbiyeh camps. Figures 20-22 show the development of UNRWA camp construction according to refugee-led socio-cultural factors across the three case studies.

Baqa'a camp was divided into five main districts named after refugees' towns of origin (Nablus, Khalil, Al-Quds A, Al-Quds C, Al-Karameh). A new district was added 6 years ago and was called "the new extension of the camp" or *Al-Mukhayyam Al-Jadeed* in Arabic (CIP UNRWA document, 2012). This division is inclusive to ties of friendship, marriage and neighborhood of origin, in addition to kinship relations.

Figure 20. A map of Baqa'a camp shows its development based on socio-cultural factors (Alqub, 2022).

In Al-Husn camp, clan and tribe-based ties were used by UNRWA to delineate the boundaries of the camp's blocks (B1, B2, B3, B4). According to E. Sqour, a refugee living in Al-Husn and a member of the DPA office in the camp, what distinguishes this camp from other camps in Jordan is that the process of its blocks' construction was gradual. This started with building Block 2 (B2) in 1969 for the Twabaseh clan, followed by B3 and B1 in 1970 for Sqour tribe, then finally B4 in 1971 for Saba'aweieh tribe. This classification does not mean these blocks are exclusive to a certain tribe or a clan, but rather it refers to the main tribe/clan that gathered at that location during its establishment. To be more precise, once refugees arrived at the campsite, they placed their tents next to fellow tribe/clan members'. Later on, when UNRWA changed its shelter policy, replacing tents with prefabricated shelters (barracks), it embraced the socio-spatial fabric that the refugees established themselves, underscoring the significance of socio-cultural

determinants in the camp evolution process (E. Sqour, personal communication, online, March 2022).

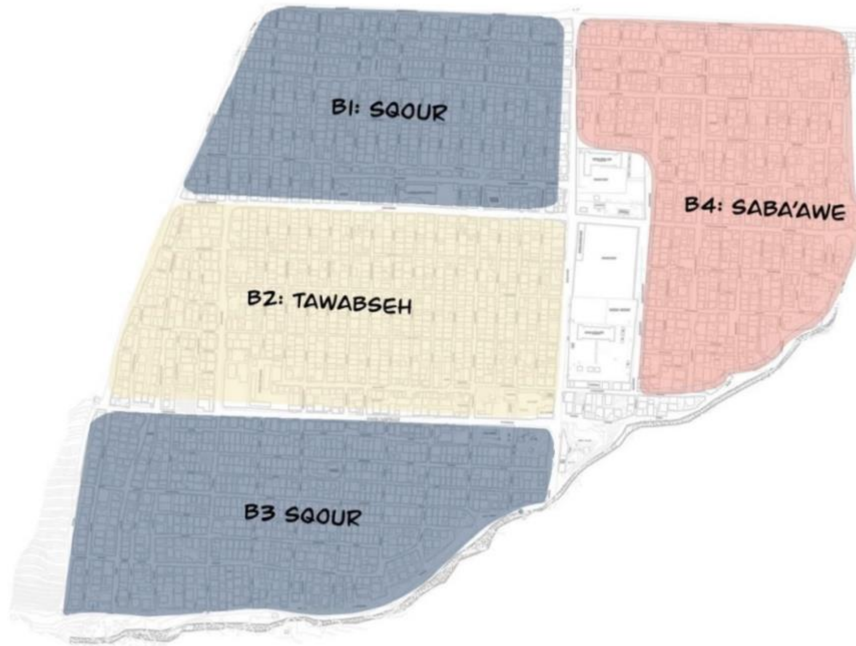


Figure 21. A map of Al-Husn camp shows its development based on socio-cultural factors (Alqub, 2022).

In Talbiyeh camp, the Iranian grant was responsible for the construction of the camp. Although UNRWA's main guidelines were followed in the camp construction, differences in the barrack unit had influenced the camp's evolution over time. The division of barracks into five rooms that each fit one family resulted in less privacy compared to Baqa'a and Al-Husn camps, where each family received their own barrack and a 96 m² plot. At first, this was not an issue, as larger outdoor areas compensated for the lack of indoor privacy. However, over time, the camp expanded and became increasingly overcrowded. The over-crowdedness of Talbiyeh camp was culturally unacceptable for the majority of Talbiyeh camp residents, who were Bedouin. I use the term Bedouin here instead of *tribe* because it denotes several tribes, all of whom are Bedouin.

Also, it is the defining socio-cultural basis that divides Talbiyeh camp (rather than a particular tribe identity, as in other cases). Bedouin or nomads are part of the Palestinian population who historically lived in *Beit Sha'ar. Beit Sha'ar* is an Arabic term that describes a particular kind of tent, commonly referred to as a Bedouin tent (Alnajadah, 2019). These tents are traditionally constructed using goat and camel hair, which is woven into robust and weather-resistant fabric capable of enduring the severe conditions of the desert environment (Alnajadah, 2019). Arab Bedouin live in tribes away from the gaze of strangers, marking them as more conservative compared to *Fallahi,* or peasants, and *Madani,* or urban elite, segments of the Palestinian population. Thus, most Bedouin refugees moved to the edges of the camp, with some even moving outside its boundaries. This resulted in the majority of those remaining inside the camp being either *Fallahi* refugees or residents from outside the camp (those of other nationalities with poor living situations). When tracing how the morphological composition of the camp has evolved, a horizontal expansion can be observed beyond the camp's defined boundaries. Refugees who moved outside the camp lost the services offered to them by the DPA, who considered those living outside the camp boundaries as ineligible to receive aid (E. Sqour, Personal communication, online, December 23rd, 2022). Nevertheless, refugees can continue to access services provided by UNRWA, provided that they possess a valid UNRWA registration card that certifies their official status as a refugee.

Figure 22. A map of Talbieh camp shows its development based on socio-cultural factors (Alqub, 2022).

In summary, the three cases have shown morphological differences in their evolution. UNRWA, the DPA and Jordan's host state's regulatory restrictions discouraged any horizontal expansion outside the defined boundaries of the camp by preventing refugees outside of these boundaries from receiving aid from DPA. However, in Talbiyeh camp for example, refugees resisted this restriction and showed a tendency to expand horizontally outside the boundaries of the camp due to socio-cultural determinants. In contrast, refugees in Baqa'a and Al-Husn tended to expand vertically rather than horizontally. Baqa'a camp stands out as having the greatest vertical expansion among the three cases. While there were some instances of horizontal expansion in Al-Husn and Baqa'a camps, these were infrequent and did not significantly shape their urban

growth. At present, structures in Palestinian refugee camps in Jordan are restricted to a maximum of three stories. Additional differences were observed in the layout and boundaries of the camps during their evolution. While UNRWA was initially intended to be the primary regulator of Palestinian refugee camps in Jordan, including determining their layout and boundaries (Hanafi et al., 2014), they ultimately adopted a refugee-led distribution approach that became the foundation of the urban fabric of the camps. For example, Baqa'a camp's layout was based on different Palestinian cities, while Talbiyeh camp was organized according to cultural divisions, and Al-Husn camp was based on clan and tribe affiliations. The research has identified the local and global factors responsible for the way the camps have evolved (e.g., physical geography, policies, refugees, geo-politics, etc.).

3.5. Discussion: Camp Evolution as *Assemblage* Formation and the Role of Refugees

This study uses the *assemblage* approach as an alternative framework of analysis for refugee camps. This *assemblage*-based approach depicts meta-spatial flows and components (i.e., human and non-human, material and non-material, tangible and intangible) as transcending camp boundaries. To be more specific, the camp space is viewed as made of multiple and overlapping *assemblages* built of components of heterogeneous networks, spaces, practices, historical legacies, material, non-material/imagined, human, and non-human components. The analysis identifies the components of the camp *assemblages* as: the host state and UNRWA (both affected by global networks, such as globalization which promotes the exchange and dissemination of knowledge and information, including best practices in policy-making, across borders and the neoliberal political economy orientation, particularly in the case of industrial cities), refugees

(mainly through socio-cultural impacts), the physical environment, construction materials, and international funds/donors.

Refugees have played a critical role as key actors in the camp *assemblages*, primarily through socio-cultural factors. The unique experiences and perspectives of refugees shaped the social and cultural fabric of the camps, influencing their physical design. By drawing on their own cultural traditions and practices, refugees were able to create new forms of socio-spatial organization. By leveraging their distinctive socio-cultural perspectives, refugees were able to offer crucial insights into the difficulties they encountered upon arriving at the camp and their preferences for spatial distribution within its confines. As primary stakeholders in the policy-making process, their input played a significant role in shaping the direction and efficacy of UNRWA policies and regulations. In other words, UNRWA was able to design more responsive policies, informed by the on-the-ground practices of refugees driven by their socio-cultural preferences.

Additionally, the other components of the camp's *assemblages* either enabled or limited the agency of refugees in their construction decisions. For instance, the physical geography of the camp, such as the topography, and construction materials used for the shelters, including the type of roofing and its durability, influenced whether refugees chose to expand vertically or horizontally. Moreover, authorities' policies affected the direction and height of the camp's morphological evolution, such as the number of floors officially allowed. These factors determined the level of agency that refugees had in shaping camp developments. The use of *assemblage* theory helps to identify these components and networks, leading to a better understanding of the opportunities and challenges faced by refugees.

Comparing the three cases validates the proposal that suggests viewing them as *assemblages*. That is, each case represents a whole. While key constituent components are shared across the cases, what matters in an *assemblage,* according to Dovey (2010), is not the individual components themselves but rather the nature of their interaction and the relations that emerge from them, which determine camp *assemblages'* properties and render each case different. It is the interaction between both the human and non-human and the material and non-material actants that has established distinctive *assemblages* in each case. The findings thus support a key tenet of *assemblage* theory and demonstrate distinctive *assemblages* for each case in terms of their evolution and morphological transformations. *Assemblage* theory refers to this understanding as *relations of exteriority*, which explains the differences among the camps, even though key components/elements might be similar across them. Macfarlane (2011) explores the concept of *relations of exteriority*, explaining that "[similar] component parts may be detached and plugged into a different *assemblage* in which its interactions are different" (p. 208).

Drawing on empirical evidence, I provide specific examples of the morphological differences among the three camps, which highlight their distinct *assemblages*. Baqa'a camp had the greatest vertical expansion, followed by Al-Husn, while Talbiyeh had the least vertical expansion but expanded the most horizontally. These differences can be attributed to the room for adaptations permitted by the physical geography and available construction materials, as they intersect within the prevailing model and rules. Baqa'a was situated in a depressed valley that restricted horizontal expansion, while Talbiyeh was located on flat desert-like land that allowed for more horizontal expansion. Additionally, the socio-cultural framework of the Palestinian refugee population was reflected in different demographic distributions among the three camps, which—

in interaction with the prevailing camp 'model' that defines the parameters of agency—affected the way it evolved over time (i.e., UNRWA's gradual construction process of blocks in Al-Husn camp followed the distribution of clans that refugees considered during the planning phase). Furthermore, while Al-Husn camp's distribution was based on clans, Baqa'a camp was divided based on the different cities in Palestine from which the refugees originated, rendering distinct *assemblages* in the three cases. The same policy can show different material manifestation, when applied in different contexts.

Based on the discussion above, the argument that proposes that the implementation of the same policy can yield outcomes that exhibit both similarities and disparities, demonstrating the potential for varied results even under identical policy frameworks, is supported by *assemblage* theory. That is, the three cases had been envisioned by UNRWA to evolve in a certain way according to specific guidelines (Hanafi et al., 2014), as they were under the same governance systems, geopolitical situation and time frame, yet the result was different in each case. Similarity is expected and understandable given the circumstances, but differences need further explanations and reasons behind them need to be questioned. In the *assemblage* approach, power is not attributed to a pre-established structure or 'given' (Blok, 2013), where collective consensus or common forms are dominant, and divergences do not exist. On the contrary, *assemblage* addresses inequality in society adequately (McFarlane, 2011). This explains how authorities (UNRWA & the state) expected a unified result due an overarching camp layout and spatial policy, but the reality was different (Hanafy et. al, 2014).

At this point, it is helpful to bring literature on *policy mobilities* to the fore. In this work, *policy mobility* has served as an illustrative lens through which to comprehend the distinctive processes

of camp evolution occurring in the three case studies. The *policy assemblage* approach outlined by Savage (2019) has clearly identified the interpretive power and explanatory capacity of the *assemblage* approach. The continuous process of assembling and de-assembling a policy based on the factors involved in a certain moment is an expression of how *assemblages* manifest in real life. The circulation of knowledge and *best practices* globally and locally is the core of policy-making, in which a policy mutates as it moves across contexts (Savage, 2019), resulting in distinctive results as demonstrated in this study. Also, there are key actors apart from the transnational experts, and which, beyond the "middling actors" advanced by Ward (2006), can constitute local on-the-ground actors, such as refugees themselves. In effect, the diversity in the outcomes that the *assemblage* approach offers opens up arenas for hope and potentiality of future possibilities and opens up space for more complex socio-political formations and sites of agency that exceeds the realm of urban planning expertise.

According to this analysis, *assemblage* can be used to grasp the divergent forms of camps. In this chapter, large-scale networks are analyzed considering global factors such as international humanitarian agencies and their increasingly neoliberal orientations and geo-political trends. The role of regional actors such as the host state, and local factors such as refugees were also analyzed. All these networks and connections interacted differently in each case, producing different contingent outcomes at a certain moment. These integrations and connections between factors are the essence of this study and the foundation on which the *assemblage* thinking is built. The camp is the result of all these factors interacting and intertwining at once, creating the image we see at a specific moment.

3.6. Conclusion

How Palestinian refugee camps have evolved since their establishment is one of the questions addressed in this chapter. However, the question that is less often asked is *why* do the configurations of these camps evolve in particular ways that seem to differ in each case? The *assemblage* approach has been the explanatory tool I have used to answer the *why* question. The *policy mobilities'* literature helps to shed light on the diversity in relation of exteriority to the current realities of the three case studies, even though they resulted from the same policy and administrative system. More concisely, I use the *assemblage* framework utilized in the *policy mobilities* field, and I use the conceptual foundations upon which the *assemblage* approach is premised, attempting to understand the refugee camp construct through it. The conceptual foundations I see most relevant to refugee camps are relation of exteriority, heterogeneity, and the relative—rather than absolute—role of power relations (De Landa, 2006; McFarlane, 2011).

The research unpacks refugee camp *assemblages* by displaying their components as outlined in the discussion section. The components of camps' *assemblages* are: 1) the host state and the UNRWA, which are influenced by global factors such as neoliberal funders, orientations and geo-political connections; 2) the refugees; 3) the physical environment; 4) available construction materials; and 5) international funding and donors. Nevertheless, the study emphasizes that what renders the three cases different was not their relative components per se, but rather the relational construct of refugee camps that depends on connections between components. Furthermore, this study highlights the significant role of refugees in shaping the evolution of the camp, particularly in terms of its layout and boundary, which are largely influenced by the

refugees' socio-cultural determinants. Ultimately, the discussion aims to reveal the various expressions of agency by camp dwellers through an examination of their *home-making* through 'camp-making' practices, and the various dynamics and factors that either enable or limit these practices, thus shaping refugee agency within the camp.

This conclusion broadens the potential of any urban site by stressing the relations among components and highlighting the wide range of urbanization trajectories possible for users of the space or professionals, or both. This is an invitation for scholars and practitioners to engage in further discussions on the potentials of understanding camps as *assemblages* in theory and practice.

Manuscript Presentation

This manuscript, titled "Refugees' *Home-making* Practices as *Assemblages:* Material and Symbolic Features of Housing Settlements in the Camp," is the second of three manuscripts that compose the body of this dissertation. These manuscripts investigate the dynamic nature of refugee camps as spatial and temporal constructs influenced by interactions and flows. The research they present examines not only internal camp dynamics, but also external influences beyond camp boundaries, with a focus on the role of refugees in shaping these processes. This manuscript is specifically addressed to architects, urban designers, and human geographers who are interested in comprehending the micro-level practices of refugees *home-making* in refugee camps, aiming to establish a sense of place and belonging within their living spaces. The target journals for publication are *Journal of Refugee Studies*, *Journal of Planning Education and Research*, *Housing Studies*, and *Urban Geography*.

The previous manuscript analyzed the construction and material (i.e., architectural) evolution of the camp space at a macro level, taking into account policy, global networks, and host state, with a focus on the role of refugees. However, to gain a deeper understanding of the camp space, this manuscript employs micro-levels of analysis and examines the daily processes of refugee *home-making* in camps pertaining to physical and symbolic features of refugees' housing settlements.

The existing perception of a refugee camp is that of a large-scale humanitarian space, often depicted as lacking a sense of belonging. This portrayal can overlook the active contributions of camp inhabitants to the construction and evolution of the camp. This manuscript examines the development of camps from the perspective of refugees by exploring their daily practices of *home-making* that transform the camp space into a familiar space. Building on studies that reclaim the agency of refugees through their daily practices (e.g., El Masri, 2020; Feigis, 2010; Ramadan, 2013) and using *assemblage* theory (Deleuze & Guattari, 1987; De Landa, 2006; McFarlane, 2009; Dovey, 2010) as an analytical approach, the chapter analyzes material and non-material *home-making* practices in refugee camps. I use a methodology that combines empirical and archival research to examine three Palestinian refugee camps in Jordan. More specifically, I draw from an ethnographic fieldwork that includes interviews, direct observation, and graphic journaling. To present and analyze the data collected, I use various methods, including illustrative sketches, diagrams, and AutoCAD drawings.

Aligned with the primary research questions of the dissertation, this manuscript seeks to understand to what extent refugees have agency in shaping their living environment, their *home-making* practices within the camp, and the opportunities and challenges they encounter in the process. It specifically focuses on analyzing the design and construction of dwellings as well as the representational elements involved in refugees' *home-making.*

Chapter 4 | Second Manuscript

Refugees' *Home-making* Practices as *Assemblages*: Material & Symbolic Features of Housing Settlements in the Camp

Abstract

Scholars often conceptualize the refugee camp as a humanitarian space (Agier, 2010) or space of protection (Ticktin, 2011) constructed by host governments along with humanitarian agencies. However, within these contexts, camp dwellers are often isolated from any opportunity to cultivate a sense of belonging. This common conception is often the result of institutional accounts and reports that fail to incorporate the voices of refugees and their everyday practices, through which they are able to exert a certain level of agency over their spaces. Therefore, in this chapter, I explore how the camp is spatially and temporally constructed through refugees' daily *home-making* practices that imbue the camp space with meanings and attachments. To achieve this, I utilize the *assemblage* theory (Deleuze & Guattari, 1987; De Landa, 2006; McFarlane, 2009; Dovey, 2010) as the analytical approach to better understand *home-making* as an open-ended process, analyzing the material and symbolic features of housing settlements in the camp. The study adopts a bottom-up methodology that combines empirical and archival research to investigate three Palestinian refugee camps in Jordan: Baqa'a, Al-Husn, and Talbiyeh. The work draws from ethnographic fieldwork based on interviews, direct observation, and graphic journaling. This study argues that refugees' *home-making* practices as *assemblages* that inform camp development, give camp dwellers a sense of place and belonging while shaping the camp into an intimate and familiar space.

4.1. Introduction

Before commencing fieldwork at the end of 2021, I had a preconceived image of a refugee camp. This image aligned with the perspectives presented in existing works such as *state of exception* (Agamben, 1998), *abject spaces* (Isin & Rygiel, 2007), *humanitarian spaces* (Agier, 2010), and *spaces of protection* (Ticktin, 2011). These works often depict these spaces as constructed in a generic or prescriptive manner, lacking the necessary characteristics to foster a sense of place or attachment, and portray camp dwellers as subject to the authority of a more powerful entity (i.e., sovereign power, host state, and humanitarian aid agencies). However, upon visiting Palestinian refugee camps in Jordan, I realized this perception, and its implications, are not necessarily accurate.

The Palestinian refugee camps selected for this study were established by the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA) in 1968 as emergency camps. The camps were intended to provide a temporary shelter for Palestinian refugees fleeing the Arab-Israeli war in 1967. However, over time, refugees have altered the material and symbolic qualities of their dwellings, transforming them into homes. Recognizing this process led me to question how refugees turn an otherwise strange space into a familiar one. To answer this question, I closely examined the homes and *home-making* practices of refugees in three selected camps in Jordan: Baqa'a, Al-Husn, and Talbiyeh.

To begin, I review the existing literature on home and *home-making* in a camp setting in this chapter (Brun & Fábos, 2015; Elmasri, 2020; Dudley, 2011), followed by a review of literature on the agency of refugees (Feigis, 2010; Ramadan, 2013; Sanyal, 2011; Abourahme, 2015). In the context of this research, *home-making* is defined as follows: adaptation practices that alter the

material and symbolic qualities of a physical dwelling (house) to transform it into a home. This research investigates refugees' everyday *home-making* practices as a process that underscores their agency in transforming a space of exile into a home. To carry out this study, I conducted ethnographic fieldwork in three Palestinian refugee camps in Jordan: Baqa'a, Talbiyeh, and Al-Husn. The research involved interviews with key actors, in graphic journaling, direct observations, and complemented by archival research. In this chapter, I explore both the material and non-material *home-making* practices of refugees in the camp setting. The main objective of this study is to understand the role of these practices in forging a sense of intimacy and familiarity in the camp space. One significant finding of this research is that camps built by UNRWA in the 1960s were deficient in key qualities that have affected their evolution over time. For example, housing units installed by UNRWA lacked sufficient space for camp dwellers' agency to thrive, due to their temporary nature. However, this does not imply that UNRWA camps prevented refugees from exercising agency in developing camp space altogether, but rather that, it is one of several factors, including socio-cultural and economic factors, that have shaped the material state of camps over time.

4.2. Literature Review

4.2.1. The Notion of *Home* and *Home-making* in Refugee Camps

Reviewing literature on the notion of *home* and *home-making* in refugee camps unravels the multiple scales of home, emphasizing sociocultural aspects that transcend its physical dimension (Dorai, 2003; Omata, 2016; Albadra & Hart, 2018; El Masri, 2020). In order to mitigate their protracted displacement, refugees develop coping strategies and special tactics in a camp setting through their *home-making* practices (Sarfo-Mensah, 2009; Dudley, 2011, Nde et al., 2020). To

start this section, I review literature on the concept of *home* in refugee camps that is particularly salient for this analysis before delving into the mechanisms of *home-making* in greater detail.

Scholarly interest in the notion of *home* in a camp setting has been growing (Brun & Fábos, 2015; El Masri, 2020; Dudley, 2011), resulting in analyses that underscore the distinct ways home can be defined in exile. One key work on the topic is that of Brun and Fábos (2015). They present a theoretical framework based on a fluid notion of "home" as both an idea and a practice, capturing refugees' aspirations and everyday routines. Within their framework, they propose a constellation of "home" consisting of three strands: (1) daily *home-making* practices ("home"), (2) memories and a sense of belonging ("Home"), and (3) the geo-political context of the homeland ("HOME"), collectively termed "home-Home-HOME." To further elaborate these three strands, Brun & Fábos (2015) explain the first element, *home*, as encompassing the everyday activities involved in managing a household. The second element, *Home*, extends beyond the physical dwelling and refers to the collection of values, traditions, memories. The focus here is on the emotional and psychological attachment to the homeland, defining home as a subjective concept that is shaped by the displaced group's desires and aspirations. The third element, HOME, refers to the broader political and historical context, presenting the interaction between the displaced and the political structure of their homeland that conditions their protracted displacement. The goal of their multi-strand framework is to challenge traditional, static conceptions of home as a fixed, physical dwelling and to capture the more porous nature that is linked to broader political and social locations and connections (Bruno and Fábos, 2015, p. 7).

El Masri (2020) also presents an important intervention in the conceptualization of "home" as it pertains to refugee camps. Her analysis begins by highlighting how one's point of view or

"situated knowledge," to use Haraway's (1988) term, influences the understanding of home within camp spaces. To do so, she draws on her experience as both a Palestinian refugee in Lebanon and a researcher to present an ethnographic and auto-ethnographic study of the camp where she was raised. Employing Brun & Fábos' (2015) framework, her "insider" positionality allows her to identify the range of elements that contribute to the production of "home" within a "space of waiting," encompassing physical alterations, storytelling, and family and community bonding. She also adopts an open conceptualization that goes beyond the immediate house and considers refugees' connections to the camp environment (walls, streets, public squares, etc.).

Significantly, such studies highlight the importance of recognizing the role of refugees in shaping their living environment and creating a sense of belonging in (and to) the camp (see also Allan, 2013, 2015 and Ramadan, 2009, 2013). They challenge depictions of camp dwellers as disempowered and lacking agency over the space. They also underscore that, to fully understand the concept of home in a refugee camp, it is important to distinguish between a physical dwelling and the multi-layered practices that turn it into a home.

4.2.2. ***Home-making* and the Agency of Refugees**

Despite the challenges they confront, refugees often display remarkable agency as they strive to create a sense of belonging in their new environment. The agency of refugees is a topic that has received greater attention in the literature of refugee camps in recent years (Feigis, 2010; Ramadan, 2013; Sanyal, 2011; Abourahme, 2015). Agency is defined as "people's capacity to act, either individually or collectively" (Hunt, 2008, p. 281). In a camp setting, the agency of camp

dwellers refers to oppositional practices “in which refugees engage in the co-production of spaces and subvert models of control and exclusion” (Dalal, 2018, p. 65).

Studies highlight how *home-making* practices—as agency—can take many forms, for example through reproducing cultural traditions and artifacts, building relations with others who hail from their homeland community, or adapting physical features and layouts of the home (Agier, 2010; Gallie, 1997). Gallie (1997), for instance, explores how Palestinian refugees enduring prolonged displacement adapt and recreate elements of their lost home, placing carpets or rugs at the center of gathering areas, known as diwans, as a symbolic representation of their cultural heritage. Also, they symbolize longing for their lost land by planting olive trees, preserving the connection to their roots. Likewise, Berg (2014) draws attention to how architectural interventions as “*home-making*” (e.g., the addition of floors or units) is a means through which the agency of camp dwellers is expressed.

Scholars suggest that *home-making* practices can operate at (or be influenced by) multiple scales: local, national and transnational (Fiddian-Qasmiyeh, 2013; Omata, 2016). For example, Fiddian-Qasmiyeh (2013) discusses how Algerian refugees in Sahrawi camps established "home-camps" (p. 631) as a way of compensating for the lack of a "home-land" (p. 631) and to rebuild a sense of national identity within the camp. More specifically, the article shows that refugees often aim to reproduce “nation” at the local scale through the use of transnational practices, such as digital *home-making,* to transcend physical limitations and connect with people both inside and outside the camp (e.g., by using smartphones and internet technologies) (Fiddian-Qasmiyeh, 2013).

The process of *home-making* can sometimes take a long and gradual form, where the home represents a product of cumulative minor architectural practices (Feigis, 2010). For Feigis (2010), these "minor practices" point to a "liberated consciousness" among camp dwellers, who practice their agency "through differentiating their self-built homes from the camp's original spatial order, which forms the structure of their prison" (Feigis, 2010, p. 428). Abourahme (2015) refers to the use of *home-making* practices to resist the original spatial order of the camp (or the installed housing unit) and reproduce it in a different manner as a process of deterritorialization followed by a reterritorialization (Abourahme, 2015). Through these sequential (deterritorialization-reterritorialization) processes, refugees force the state to redraw the "political redlines" (p. 211), and by extension redefine the divide between formal and informal. For instance, the restrictive laws imposed on the Palestinian camps in Lebanon (e.g., height restrictions) resulted in unintended consequences. Refugees resorted to violating these laws, for instance by using concrete materials covered with cloth, despite the prohibition of these materials. Similarly, Sanyal (2011) shows that while the Lebanese state banned the use of durable material (such as concrete) in camp construction, as it would signal permanency, refugees found a way of covertly using new building materials (such as stone or adobe bricks) on the inside of their tent walls in order to challenge the restriction while still creating a more secure living space within their temporary "home.".

This discussion of refugees' *home-making* practices requires distinguishing between legality, legitimacy, and informality. Legitimacy concerns actions aligned with the accepted norms, values, beliefs, practices, and procedures of a particular group (Zelditch, 2001). Gempler (2017, p. 20) points out that informality has become synonymous with legitimacy, reshaping the boundaries

of "legitimized urban space." However, according to Gempler, the only form of informality that is potentially negative is one that contrasts with legitimacy. Yiftachel (2009) refers to the practices of informality among Bedouin Arabs in Beer Sheva using the term "gray spaces," which describes an urban area where the evolving relationship between the legal and illegal realms defines its condition. Ultimately, these dynamics give rise to counter-politics and drive urban development. This urban development, fueled by informality, elucidates how the latter can function as a mode of urbanization.

Reflecting on such practices, Feigis (2010) refers to refugees as the real builder or “masters of the space” (p. 429), as they are able to recreate their home in exile, envision a life, and hold potentials of planning, despite their common portrayal as “sad victims” (El Masri, 2020, p.6). Sanyal (2011) refers to that master of the space (the refugee) as an urban squatter and compares resistance practices with conventional planning practices. The author contends that by squatting, the refugees perform “an act of rebellion” (p. 877) and make claims to space to fulfill their basic needs. Yet, the refugee does so in a way that departs from the conventional planning model, which depicts a particular linear sequence of land development: “planning, servicing, building and occupation,” what Baross (1990) terms the PSBO model (Sanyal, 2011, p. 886). It also departs from the general pattern of informal housing, which follows a sequence of “occupation, building, servicing and planning or OBSP” (Sanyal, 2011, p. 886). The refugee camp departs from these models, instead conforming to what Sanyal (2011) describes as the “squatting in the camps” model (p. 886), which follows a “planning, occupation, servicing and building or POSB pattern.” (p.886). Squatting in this context therefore exemplifies a *home-making* practice and a new

expression of ‘planning agency’, which refugees carry out in the camp beyond the gaze of the state (Sanyal, 2011).

4.2.2.1. *Home-making* and the Contingent Agency of Refugees

Ramadan (2013) refers to the inherent connection between the agency of refugees and geopolitics. He uses the expression “political agency” (p. 67) to describe the material practices of the camp dwellers and the politics embedded in them. That is, Ramadan (2013) argues that acts of resistance and everyday geopolitics that can be seen in the “symbolic landscape” (p. 66; see also Ramadan, 2009) of the camp are a manifestation of the refugees’ political agency. By *symbolic landscape,* Ramadan (2009) refers to the material artifacts that Palestinian refugees construct and employ in their *home-making* practices (e.g., Palestinian flags, murals, and graffiti that are of national character). Such artifacts show the fusion of memory, aspirations and everyday practice, akin to “home-Home-HOME” that Brun & Fábos (2015) discuss.

In sum, *home* for refugees, including Palestinians, comes to signify something more complex when the frame of analysis shifts from a top-down approach to one that is an expression of its people's unique feeling of intimacy. Harker (2009), for example, calls to change the lens used to study Palestinian *homes,* from one that emphasizes the Israeli occupation to one that centers Palestinians and their domestic traditions as visible and cherished, with similar calls being made in relation to camp dwellings (El Masri, 2020). These calls aim to illuminate the agency and (relative) autonomy of refugees in constructing their home space, even in extremely restrictive circumstances.

The existing literature also underscores how different factors (e.g., material, geopolitical, socio-economic) can interact with—and shape—refugees' *home-making* practices. Complex networks and relationships define refugees' sphere of influence and showcase *home-making* as a bottom-up approach through which the agency of refugees thrives, albeit not unmediated. For example, Abourahme (2015), stresses the role of material; in particular, cement used in building homes in Palestinian camps, as "central to the mediation of what is called agency" (Abourahme, 2015, p. 204). That is, Abourahme examines cement as the mediator between the materiality of the camp and representational life in refugee camps. This generates tension between the permanence conveyed by the built environment, represented by cement (turned into concrete in the built structures), and the temporary presence of the refugees in the camp. Cement serves as an intermediary or facilitator of human action within the camp, empowering refugees to modify and shape their built environment by constructing more substantial and durable housing. In his work, Abourahme (2015) highlights the agency of non-human actors (i.e., cement) and their role in shaping social interactions (i.e., collaborative construction) and political claims. The building of cement houses allows for vertical expansion within the camp, which changes its density and dynamics. This shift to more permanent cement houses transforms the camp from a temporary encampment into an urban-like agglomeration (Abourahme, 2015). As a result, the regulatory authority of the state is challenged. This example demonstrates how physical structures and materials can serve as a representation of a political stance or an act of resistance against dominant discourses within these spaces.

Given the contingent and changeable nature of *home-making* practices in these camps, a dynamic approach is necessary to their comprehension. Therefore, in the following section, I

introduce *assemblage* theory as the framework to examine the interacting factors, flows, and networks that perpetuate the ever-evolving nature of homes within the camp.

4.3. Theoretical Framework: Understanding Refugees' *Home-making* through the Lens of *Assemblage*

Assemblage Theory, developed by Deleuze and Guattari (1988), emphasizes an approach to reading spaces, practices, and systems as dynamic, rather than fixed or predetermined. The theory describes entities as composed of human and non-human components and flows that assemble and disassemble through precarious, contingent, and ephemeral relations (Delanda, 2006; McFarlane, 2009; Dovey, 2010).

In this chapter, I utilize the *assemblage* approach to explore how refugees in camps construct their residential built environment. A focus on the residential site as the point of departure provides a direct lens into *home-making* practices that involve daily encounters. Such a focus aligns with the core purpose of the refugee camp, as defined by the United Nations Commission on Human Rights (UNHCR), i.e., to provide a place of protection and refuge.

As highlighted in the literature review, home and the process of *home-making* in a refugee camp are not static; rather they exhibit a fluid and ever-evolving nature. This underscores the importance of *assemblage* theory, as it provides insights into the multi-dimensional and multi-scalar characteristics of these practices. These characteristics, along with the *assemblage* approach, enhance our understanding of the complexities involved in constructing and experiencing homes within the camp context. *Assemblage* theory provides a framework that

recognizes that the construction of home involves the coming together of various elements and flows—material, non-material, human, and non-human—that interact and shape the home and *home-making* practices of refugees in the camp (i.e., these elements and flows include but are not limited to physical structures, social networks, cultural practices and preferences, and power dynamics, etc.). By adopting the *assemblage* approach, the research acknowledges the complexity and interconnectedness of these elements and flows in the context of home-making. It seeks to shed light on the ways these elements and flows interact and influence each other, impacting the refugees' agency in their pursuit of creating a home within the camp and delineating the boundaries of this agency.

This research builds upon previous studies of *home-making* that seek to present a more dynamic conceptualization of refugees' *home-making* practices through the use of the *assemblage* approach (Ramadan, 2013; Abourahmeh, 2015). However, what differentiates my work from theirs is my aim to add further insights into the ways that socio-spatial inequalities and power relations can mediate and shape the agency of refugees in their pursuit of making a home.

4.4. Methodology

In this study, I employ a bottom-up approach to examining refugees' *home-making* practices, particularly in relation to the physical and symbolic features of housing settlements, which transform a house (the physical dwelling) into a home (characterized by familiarity and intimacy and not limited to the physical dimension). Refugees' *home-making* practices represent an ongoing process of constructing and evolving the home space due to the "state of perpetual temporariness" within the camp (Mould, 2018, p. 399). Therefore, the methodological approach

I employ in this chapter is *assemblage* theory, which provides a framework for understanding *home-making* as an *assemblage* formation.

I use a methodology that encompasses archival and empirical research. Archival research helps gain first-hand insights into past events and the experiences of refugees, contributing to the preservation of collective memory and cultural heritage. The empirical research also relies on an ethnographic approach that includes interviews, direct observation, and graphic journaling. The ethnographic approach involved fieldwork spanning from November 2021 to April 2022 in three Palestinian refugee camps in Jordan: Baqa'a, Al-Husn, and Talbiyeh. The importance of this approach lies in its ability to uncover social dynamics and data through the researcher's direct observation and handmade graphic documentation. Furthermore, I conducted semi-structured interviews with key actors, including refugees and officials. These semi-structured interviews involve a flexible yet focused approach to conversation. Although I designed interviews to cover certain themes, I also provided room for participants to express themselves freely (see Chapter 3 for further details on this method).

Drawing inspiration from *Writing Ethnographic Fieldnotes (Emerson et al., 2011),* I present excerpts of interviews and testimonies in the form of vignettes. This method includes several steps: (1) introducing a theme or a concept, (2) providing a concise introduction to the interview excerpt, (3) incorporating a direct quote from the interview or fieldnote, and (4) concluding by offering an analysis of the excerpts. Using this approach, I analyze refugees' *home-making* practices to understand their active role in co-creating camp spaces. Additionally, I map out connections between *home-making* practices and hidden factors, exchanges, and flows (e.g., socio-cultural, economic, political, and power-related factors) that shape these practices, and

accordingly refugees' agency. This aligns with conceptualizing *home-making* practices as *assemblage* formations, which emphasizes the importance of understanding any entity dynamically by highlighting its constituent components and flows, as well as the relationships among them. In addition to the aforementioned methods, data analysis also relies on handmade sketches, photographic analysis, AutoCAD drawings and illustrative tables.

4.5. Analysis: The Evolution of Refugee Homes in Camps and the Manifestation of Refugee Agency

In the empirical part of this study, I draw on first-hand life experiences obtained from the field, and other methods, to explore how refugees perceive their agency and the role of power relations in the *home-making* process. Beginning with the first housing unit installed by UNRWA in the Palestinian camps, I trace how refugees have transformed and altered their homes over time, highlighting the evolving UNRWA guidelines and regulations in the process. I find that guidelines intended to shape refugees' homes have themselves been repeatedly shaped by refugees' own *home-making* practices. Next, I present examples of how refugees exercise agency through *home-making*, drawing from entitlement to the *right to return*[20] and other factors (e.g., political connections). Through this investigation, I question the relations, influences, and networks linking *home-making* and homeland attachments, ultimately identifying two main types of *home-making*: material (e.g., material culture and architecture) and non-material (e.g., oral history and narratives). These two categories are presented as distinct for the purpose of analysis, while recognizing there may be fluidity in the actual construction of home. By using an

assemblage approach, this empirical section offers insights into understanding the complex nature of *home-making.*

4.5.1. A Graphic Illustration of the Evolution of Refugee Homes in Camps: Piecemeal and Continuous Transformations

I begin with the first UNRWA housing unit installed in the Palestinian refugee camps. Decisions made by the Jordanian government relating to the construction of the post-1967 camps differed from those made for the post-1948 camps (Hanafi et al., 2014). That is, while the post-1948 camps were located away from the Palestinian borderline, the Jordanian government chose to locate the post-1967 camps in this area, hoping to exert pressure on Israel to allow the refugees to return to their homes in Palestine (Hanafi et al., 2014). However, this strategy backfired when the proximity of the camps to the refugees' homeland inspired the birth of the Palestinian Liberation Organization (PLO), a militant organization that fought against Israel (Hanafi et al., 2014). As a result of Israeli attacks targeting the PLO in the Jordanian camps in 1968, the Jordanian government relocated the camps to less contentious locations, away from the points of conflict and tension (Hanafi et al., 2014).

The next phase of camp construction was characterized by semi-permanency, driven by geographical and humanitarian factors such as harsh winters and difficult living conditions (H. Sqour, personal interview, Al-Husn camp, December 21, 2021). After receiving permission from the government to begin this phase in 1968, UNRWA tested eight experimental prototypes of semi-permanent shelters in Baqa'a camp. They ultimately decided on asbestos shelters, despite drawbacks such as flammability, cost, and the potential for health hazards. Hanafi et al. (2014)

claim that the choice of asbestos shelters was the result of the London-based Conport Structures Ltd.'s close collaboration with the Jordanian government in promoting its prototype. Figures 23-25 show housing unit designs based on information from UNRWA archives, followed by a timeline that displays how building guidelines and laws changed in response to refugee pressures and needs. These figures utilize 3D graphic simulation techniques to display both the UNRWA model and the special case of Talbiyeh camp, installed via Iranian grant.[21]

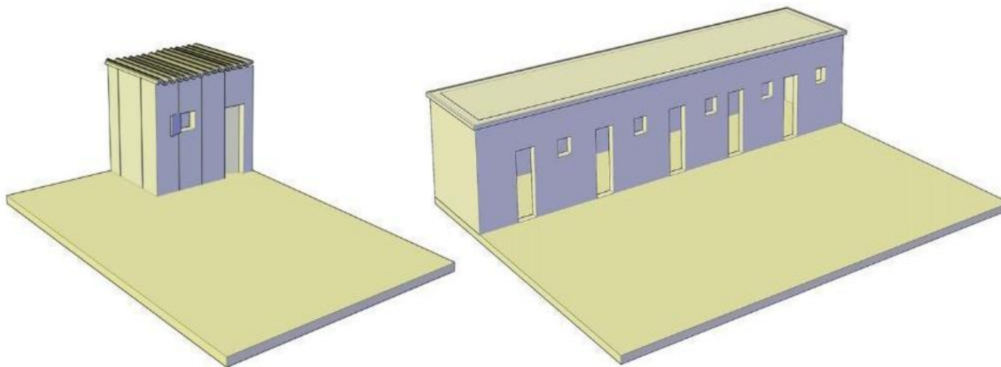


Figure 23. UNRWA housing unit (left) and Talbiyeh unit (right) (Alqub, 2022)

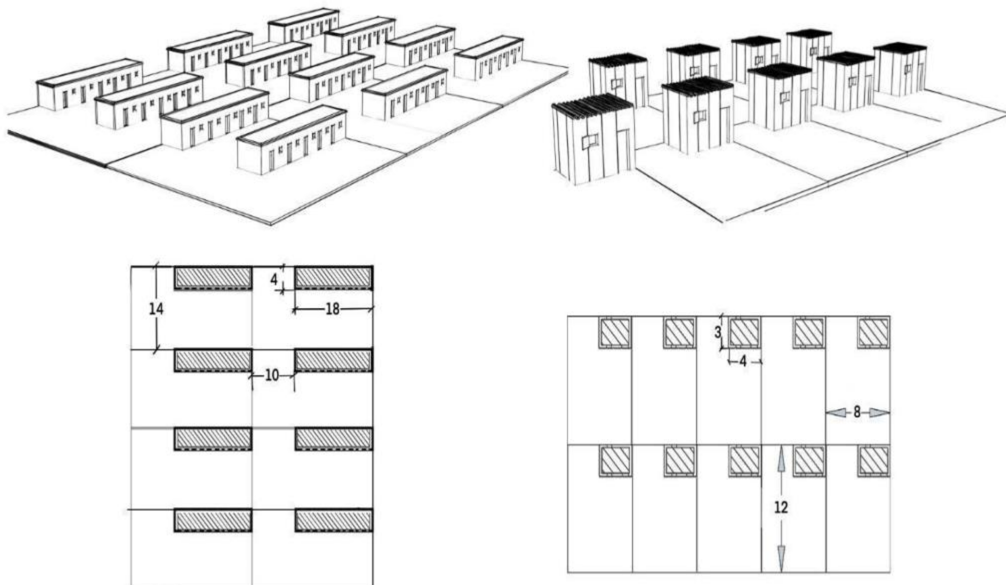


Figure 24. Talbiyeh housing block unit and its master plan (left). UNRWA housing block unit and its master plan (right) (Alqub, 2022).

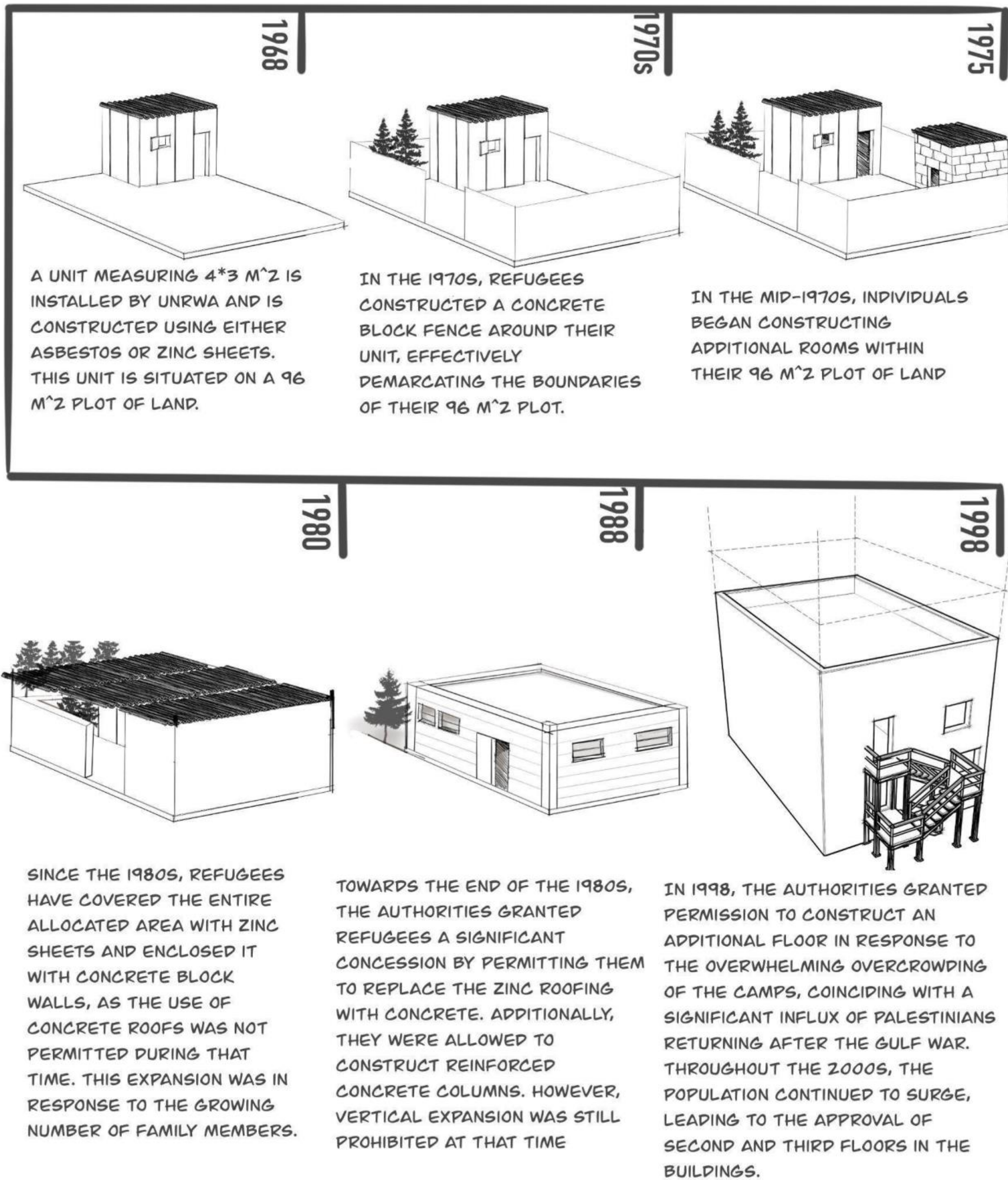


Figure 25. A timeline of change to building guidelines and laws in response to refugee pressure and needs (Alqub, 2022).

Figure 26. Barracks in Balata camp (West Bank) in 1967. (Salti, 2009).

4.5.2. The Material Manifestation of the Agency of Refugees

The agency of refugees has allowed them to adapt their dwellings even when in contravention of the law. When I asked about the refugees' spatial infringements and authorities' reaction to such illegal acts, a first-generation refugee from Al-Husn camp responded:

> "We refugees had nothing to lose, we lost everything the minute we left our homeland, they thought we were compensated with a 96 m^2 plot of land! Nothing will ever compensate for our loss, our children and grandchildren's loss. This camp was meant to be temporary, but not anymore; yet we're still struggling to fit in the same piece of land we were given more than 50 years ago, how come? All families here have doubled if not tripled in number, where would we go? Our right to expand is legitimate even if not legal. I, myself, had to violate the law and add an extra 45 m^2 to the 96 m^2 allowed. I took it from the area of the main street. The DPA found out about this violation and recorded it

as an infraction that needs to be corrected. However, I changed nothing, and I will not, and the DPA doesn't go further beyond this step legally. I had to do so, it's my right to do so. I live here with my extended family in this three-floor house, where my mother lives on the first floor, my wife and I on the second floor, and my sons on the third." (H. Mawali, Personal communication, Al-Husn camp, December 20th, 2021). See Figure 27 below.

Figure 27. An edited photo of Mawali's home in Al-Husn camp showing, in orange, illegal structural additions, Irbid, Jordan (Alqub, 2021).

Here, H. Mawali touches upon the tension between legality and legitimacy through his informal practice, violating laws and regulations. Mawali's experiences with informal practices speak to the previously discussed relationship between legitimacy, and informality (Zelditch, 2001; Gempler, 2017; Yiftachel, 2009). That is, he believes what he did is acceptable in the refugee community and conforms to the norms and standards of what a normal family would need to survive, corresponding to the definition of legitimacy provided by Zelditch (2001). Mawali makes

a connection between legitimacy and informality, and for refugees living in the camp, informality is equivalent to legitimacy. They believe it is their right to rethink the legitimacy of the boundaries given to them and extend them as needed, redefining the boundaries of the "legitimized urban space" (Gempler, 2017, p. 20). As illustrated previously, the changing relationship between the legal and illegal realm has shaped both UNRWA and other governmental institutions throughout history. Refugees' agency has served as a major driver of counter-politics and motivated new forms of urban development. Figure 28 shows a comparison between housing units in the 1970s and the present day in Al-Husn camp.

Figure 28. On the left, a photo from the 1970s depicts a housing unit (UNRWA archive), while on the right, a contemporary image shows the current state of housing units, Irbid, Jordan (Alqub, 2021).

The density of Talbiyeh and Baqa'a camps was much higher than in Al-Husn camp, prompting refugees to combine two to three housing units adjacent to one another. This practice helped alleviate the lack of comfortable space inside homes. F. Al Hatabeh from Talbiyeh camp

explains how refugees were able to transcend UNRWA guidelines while remaining within legal boundaries.

> “We used to live here all together, my family and my uncle’s. It was known that whoever has the ration card [one card is given to each family that qualifies them for one housing unit along with other benefits] can get a housing unit. My dad and uncle each had a card, and mom managed to get one too, so we got three units in total. They decided to open the three units to each other, making it one big house. They transformed the design of the house partitions to better suit our needs. That was a clever idea! Now my uncle's family had left the camp, my mom and dad passed away a long time ago, so I live here with my kids after the death of my husband. Apparently, it has become a big house for one family, which is a blessing compared to other houses in the camp” (F. Al-Hatabeh, Personal communication, Talbiyeh camp, December 13th, 2021).

Figure 29 provides visual clarification of Hatabeh’s home before and after the transformation.

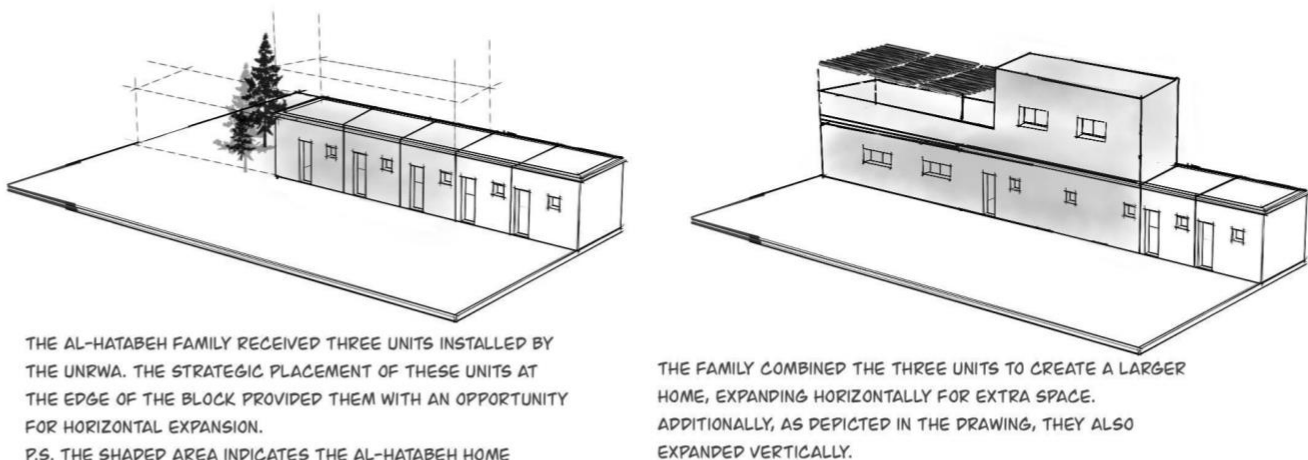


Figure 29. A comparison between Al-Hatabah’s home in Talbiyeh camp in the 1970s and now, (Alqub, 2021).

This fragment reveals a different mode of refugee agency. In the above quote, F. Al-Hatabeh highlights other networks that make up the circle of influence of an individual's agency. While her case is legally valid, it is unclear how both her mother and father each received a ration card when each family is only eligible for one card. Here, the role of social power relations comes into play. According to interviewees from the three camps, connections between a refugee and a DPA or UNRWA staff member can result in that individual receiving benefits at the expense of others.

While it is uncertain whether this phenomenon is generalizable, interviewees from the three cases confirmed that it has occurred since the camps were first established. F. Al-Hatabeh reports that refugees with connections often managed to acquire larger or multiple tents, revealing more hidden networks that make up refugees' *home-making* practices. These networks are visually translated in the final appearance of a home, and they differ from case to case, demonstrating significant social disparities within the same context. Figure 30 demonstrates the extent to which social differences are visually manifested in the homes of Talbiyeh camp and the contingent nature of refugee agency.

Figure 30. To the left, photos show homes that reflect high socio-economic status. To the right, photos show homes that highlight a high level of poverty, Amman, Jordan (Alqub, 2021).

The influence of social power relations is particularly evident in the case of Baqa'a camp, from which several important political figures have emerged. Several ministers and members of Jordanian parliament were once refugees from Baqa'a camp. In addition to its relatively large size, high population density, and strategic commercial location, the presence of camp residents in positions of authority has strengthened the position of Baqa'a in terms of social power relations. However, most of the resulting privileges benefit a specific category of the population, particularly those with commercial interests in the camp or those directly connected to powerful figures (DPA member, Baqa'a camp, personal communication, January 2022).

According to U. Jadallah, a woman living in Baqa'a camp:

> "The overcrowded camp is suffocating us. The camp situation is getting worse day by day. The UNRWA responsibilities in the camp have been reduced to only education, health care and social work sectors. However, the UNRWA builds units for commercial use, despite our continuous call and demand to build more housing units." (U. Jadallah, personal communication, Baqa'a camp, January 5th, 2022).

The woman expressed her frustration at UNRWA's failure to address the demands of the residents. Her comments are consistent with those of other interviewees, who speak of refugees who have sold their housing units to be converted into commercial businesses and have left the camp as a result. This trend raises political concerns as the existence of refugees in the camp serves as a constant reminder of their geopolitical crisis and their inalienable right to return to their homeland. Diminishing their presence in the camp is viewed as abandoning their political cause and accepting the concept of an alternative homeland for Palestinians in Jordan. This trend can also be seen as a gradual process of erasing the camp's identity as a place of refuge,

transforming it into a commercial center and disconnecting it from its original purpose. Figure 31 displays messages written on the walls of homes in Baqa'a camp in resistance to such actions.

Figure 31. The photo showcases messages written on the walls of homes in Baqa'a camp, conveying the statement: "The camp is not for sale, no to permanent settlement" (Maqusi, 2021).

4.5.3. *Home-making* & Homeland Attachments

The existence of refugee camps serves as a constant reminder of refugees' right to return to their ancestral lands. The link between *home-making* in exile and the homeland involves a complex web of networks, factors, knowledge, shared values, and relationships that have evolved since the establishment of the camps.

For example, K. Awwad, an interviewee from Al-Husn views the camp as a miniature version of Palestine. Refugees in the camp try to recreate Palestine in as much detail as possible, from material culture in their homes to streets and stores named after Palestinian cities. Even the local dialect used in the camp reflects the original dialect of the city or town that the refugees came from. These examples, among other manifestations of attachment to the homeland, represent a mode of *home-making* in exile that seeks to make the camp space as familiar as possible.

Based on the research findings, this study identifies two types of *home-making* practices in the camp space: material and non-material *home-making* practices. The following sections explore each type in more depth.

4.5.3.1. Material *Home-making*

Examining refugee camps reveals various modes through which *home-making* is expressed. This section addresses the material aspect of *home-making* practices, which encompasses fields such as architecture, and material culture, including symbolic material. Examining the material expressions of *home-making* sheds light on the socio-economic and political contexts in which they are situated. Similarly, Symbolic landscapes such as graffiti and murals reflect a process of identity production and reproduction, making people's meanings and reflections visible (Ramadan, 2013). While Ramadan (2013) examines these dynamics at the scale of the camp, such landscapes, or material culture, also manifest in the home.

Figure 32. A photo shows a house in Baqa'a camp, constructed with various materials, Amman, Jordan (Alqub, 2021).

This section begins with examples of material culture found in the camp space that demonstrate strong attachments to the homeland. A. Osama, a first-generation refugee in her 90s, like many other Palestinian women in the camp, explains how she attempts to reconstruct Palestine in her home in Baqa'a camp:

> "My existence in the camp is a continuous reflection of my attachment to Palestine. It has been a frozen moment since 1967, until we're back… My son was two-year-old when he passed away. Once we arrived in the camp, he was the first person to die in Baqa'a camp. There were no cemeteries built yet in which we can bury him. I buried him in the valley in a nearby area, therefore my attachment is sentimental too to this camp…. meanwhile, I believed that I was building Palestine in the camp through cooking. I can cook all the Palestinian dishes, using tools that I brought with me from my home in Ramallah. I even make "*Sha'eriyeh*" [pasta-like food] myself, and I make "*maftoul*" [boiled and sun-dried wheat stretched by hand], using my *maftooleyeh* [traditional *maftoul* pot]. I like to prepare the original Palestinian recipe of *Za'atar* [ground thyme mixed with other ingredients]. You think the Za'atar sold in markets is yummy? It is trash, you should try the one I do myself! Everything about cooking reminds me of Palestine, the taste, the smell, everything, the experience." (A. Osama, Baqa'a camp, personal communication, January 2022)

In addition to the moving story of the death of A. Osama's young son during their difficult journey from Palestine to Jordan, which created an extra attachment to the camp, she also spoke with pride about her cooking skills. Speaking with her revealed an example of material *home-making* practices, specifically centered around food culture. This example includes the cooking tools she still uses to this day. Food culture, through which Palestinian cuisine serves as a material manifestation of *home-making*, highlights A. Osama's strong sense of rootedness and sense of belonging.

During our conversation, A. Osama suddenly left and returned with an old-fashioned key and handmade accessories.

> “Do you see this key? This is my house key in Ramallah, we left the house, locking it and thinking that it is a matter of days, not even months, then we’re going to come back. Actually, we have been told that literally. Look at it, it is covered with rust just like our hearts, hoping to go back one day.”
>
> “Why do you still keep it?”, I asked her.
>
> “Because this situation will end one day and we’re going back, inshAllah [God willing],” she answered.
>
> “What are these gorgeous accessories?”, I said.
>
> “I make them, whenever I have time, I use my sewing skills and embroider leftover fabrics to end up with a beautiful Palestinian authentic piece,” she answered.

This summarizes the daily life of a first-generation refugee woman in exile—an everlasting process of remaining attached to the homeland as much as possible. Sarfo-Mensah’s (2009) writing on refugees’ coping methods and acts of meaning-making helps to understand the significance of these practices in helping refugees recover from the stressors of war and their relocation. In this case, A. Osama's *home-making* acts, expressed through cooking and embroidery serve as a relief method, allowing her to express her anger, trauma, and sadness, as well as a connection to enduring memories and future aspirations of return, aligning with the work of Brun & Fábos (2015) and El Masri (2020).

Cooking and embroidery practices are gendered activities in Palestinian culture, dominated by women in the household. This is true not only for A. Osama but also for every home I visited during the study, with women engaging in these practices for work or as a hobby. The reasons these activities were practiced differed across the camps. Talbiyeh camp had the worst living conditions, and as a result, more women cooked and embroidered dresses as a means of earning a living. In contrast, in Al-Husn, a large percentage of women utilized both practices primarily as

a way to preserve their heritage and connection to the land. Figure 33 shows examples of material culture, such as tools and cooking utensils used by refugees in their *home-making* practices.

Figure 33. Traditional cooking tools used in Palestine, Amman, Jordan (Alqub, 2022).

Similarly, the preparation of food is a significant cultural practice in both Talbiyeh and Al-Husn camps and is carried out by all segments of the Palestinian population, including Bedouin, ex-Gazans, and *Fallahi*. Each group prepares unique dishes and bakes bread on a *Saj*—a traditional convex metal griddle. These practices are ways for refugees to maintain their cultural identity and connection to their homeland through food. Figure 34 illustrates the process of making bread on a Saj in the camp.

Figure 34. A set of photos that show Bedouin material culture as part of the Palestinian population. It also shows a *Saj* and a Bedouin Palestinian woman in Talbiyeh camp who insisted on baking us fresh bread—a tradition in the Palestinian desert when a guest is visiting, Amman, Jordan (Alqub, 2022).

A. Osama's embroidered handmade accessories exemplify how the art of embroidery can turn everyday items into cultural artifacts. Embroidery, known as *tatreez* in Arabic, holds a unique place in Palestinian tradition and culture, and this is reflected by its popularity within refugee camps. E. Shatarat, a grandmother in her late sixties, elaborated on this topic upon inviting me to her room, where she laid out all the Palestinian traditional dresses she had made on the bed and said:

> "Embroidery is a skill that all Palestinian women used to master; just like cooking for example, a girl should know how to embroider from a young age. I will explain to you the hidden meanings behind each pattern, as each dress (*Thobe*) represents a region, a village, or a city in Palestine. And accordingly, each place has a distinct pattern. The first dress belongs to cities of the Palestinian coast (Jafa, Haifa, Lodd, and Ramleh), called the lemon-colored dress, the name and pattern represents lemon groves (*bayarat* in Arabic) known to exist in the cities of the coast. Also, the maroon dress belongs to Jerusalem city and *Beit-Mahseir* area, where its pattern represents the pigeon or birds that exist widely in this area specifically. Other dresses as you see show other natural features or carob trees, gazelle, and ducks. Each pattern tells a story that is relevant to the place it was worn in'' (E. Shatarat, Baqa'a camp, personal communication, January 2022)

This excerpt offers valuable insights and serves as a written document that preserves an important aspect of Palestinian cultural heritage. The patterns she describes create a connection between a specific place and time. Each town or city is portrayed through the natural features that existed there before 1948. However, it is important to acknowledge that the current condition of these towns and cities has changed due to the creation of a new state, resulting in the replacement and erasure of some Palestinian villages and cities that once existed. Salamon (2016) describes how embroidery is inherited as a tangible cultural practice from one generation to the next. By constructing an image of a city in memory and passing it on to those who did not have the opportunity to see it, a home (city or village) is preserved through time, even if it no longer exists. Refer to Figures 35 and 36 for examples of Palestinian embroidery.

Figure 35. Examples of Palestinian embroidered dresses (*Thobe*) from E. Shatarat—one lemon coloured (top) and one maroon (bottom), Amman, Jordan (Alqub, 2022).

Figure 36. Examples of traditional Palestinian embroidered dresses and accessories, Amman, Jordan (Alqub, 2022).

Architectural appropriation and symbolic scenes such as murals, embroidered maps, and public paintings are also examples of material *home-making* practices. Steigemann and Misselwitz (2020) explain that architectural appropriation by refugees in shelters is a process of physically altering or adapting the space to create a more comfortable living environment. This practice may stem from a socio-cultural need among refugees to create a home-like atmosphere within the camp. Before delving into the core of refugees' material *home-making* practices, it is important to consider the cultural and regional context and its relationship with the built environment.

When we talk about a particular context, we refer to the combination of various elements or factors (e.g., social, cultural, historical, economic, political, and environmental) that come together and interact within a specific area or setting. This context is then reflected in place-specific architecture, which is essentially a built environment that is culturally oriented (Alqub, 2016). In the case of the camps, two key determinants shape the socio-cultural framework: the different segments of the Palestinian population, mainly *Fallahi* and Bedouin, and the dominant culture of the region, influenced by Islamic teachings. As a result, these values are sustained through architecture or the built environment. This type of architecture is less concerned with superficial or decorative aspects and instead places a higher value on the conceptual and spiritual dimensions of the design, such as equity, privacy, respect, modesty, connectivity, and aesthetic appreciation. However, these values and principles can still be visually evident in the built environment; for example, the value of privacy is manifested through the strategic placement of windows, ensuring the residents' privacy (Alqub, 2016).

The values are reflected in the material *home-making* practices of the refugees. UNRWA applied a one-size-fits-all model of housing that did not align with the cultural preferences of refugees. As a result, refugees felt the need to modify their housing units to make them more suitable for their needs. The socio-cultural differences between the *Fallahi* and Bedouin were particularly evident in Talbiyeh camp, which had a significant Bedouin population. Bedouin are typically more conservative and prefer living in open areas, away from those from outside their community. Initially, the camp's layout, which combined five units in one long structure with each room for a family, was acceptable. However, it became unbearable after the population rapidly increased.

Consequently, the Bedouin moved outside the camp's limits in search of less crowded areas that resembled their former settlements in Palestine. They ultimately settled at the camp's edges.

In contrast, *Fallahi* (peasants) are less conservative, compared to Bedouin, and more willing to engage with other camp residents, including strangers, visitors, and people from different nationalities. These cultural differences are reflected in their material *home-making* practices and the location of their settlements. Table 1 compares the main material *home-making* differences between *Fallahi* and Bedouin cultures.

Main Differences	***Fallahi* (Peasants)**	***Bedouin* (Nomads)**
Location in relation to camp boundaries	Mostly live within camp boundaries	Live outside the camp boundaries
Location of settlement according to kinship ties	Do not necessarily live in tribes or clans	Live close to their tribe members
Architectural differences at the scale of home	-Smaller homes -More windows overlooking the streets	-Larger homes, away from strangers - Gender-based rooms - Fewer windows

Table 1. Differences between *Fallahi* and Bedouin segments of the Palestinian population (Alqub, 2022).

Figure 37. Physical expressions of the Bedouin built environment. A traditional Bedouin living room (top left). The use of *Manam,* where blankets and mattresses used at night are stored in the morning to save space (bottom left). The use of curtains to separate gender-based rooms (right), Irbid, Jordan (Alqub, 2022).

The second determinant that influences the socio-cultural dimension of camps is the dominant culture of the region, which draws inspiration from Islamic teachings. The following section explores these values and how they are represented in the material *home-making* practices of refugees across the three cases. These values include *Privacy, Connectivity, Respect, Equity, Modesty*, and *Aesthetic Appreciation*. Table 2 outlines each value and corresponding material *home-making* practices.

Value	Material *Home-making* practices
Privacy	● Window placement is higher than the neighbor's line of sight to ensure privacy (around 1.8 m from the ground), See Figure 38. ● Refugees added fences around their units to create a private internal courtyard. ● Ventilation passages (0.7m wide) are closed with doors in the interest of privacy.
Connectivity	● Open spaces, internal courtyard, and roofs used for social gatherings. ● *Home* vertical extension to include extended family, with each floor accommodating a generation (affirming the importance of family attachments). ● In order to sustain cultural practices in ceremonies, refugees raise a white flag on top of their homes as a sign that there is a wedding in this house and the invitation is open for all.
Respect	● The axes of circulation at a *home* divide between "guest axis" and "house residents' axis", respecting both parties' needs and separating the space allocated for guests from residents. ● The use of roofs in the camp is constrained by dweller's rules that determine the limits of each neighbor's use, time, and nature. That is, due to the shared or close proximity of roofs in the camp, there is a need to consider the privacy of neighbors. Thus, refugees have implemented discreet guidelines (that they develop among each other) regulating the usage of rooftop areas, protecting the privacy of neighbors. ● In some homes, a central place is allocated to the elderly, as they are the most respected members of the household (kissing hands is a sign of respect—see Figure 38).
Modesty	● In many cases, particularly within the camp boundaries, the external facades of the structures are modest in appearance. However, the interiors reveal a wealth of intricate details and decorations. This deliberate approach is often adopted as a means to express modesty and disregard any social hierarchies associated with the built environment. It should be noted that while this observation is not universally applicable, it is a common characteristic observed within the camp setting.
Aesthetic appreciation	● Internal courtyards furnished with homemade benches and rugs. ● The use of embroidery in making decorative pieces and furniture. ● Roof gardens and planting in window boxes. ● The use of indoor porches utilizing Islamic architectural features.

Table 2. The table displays a specific value alongside corresponding material home-making practices that reflect that particular value.

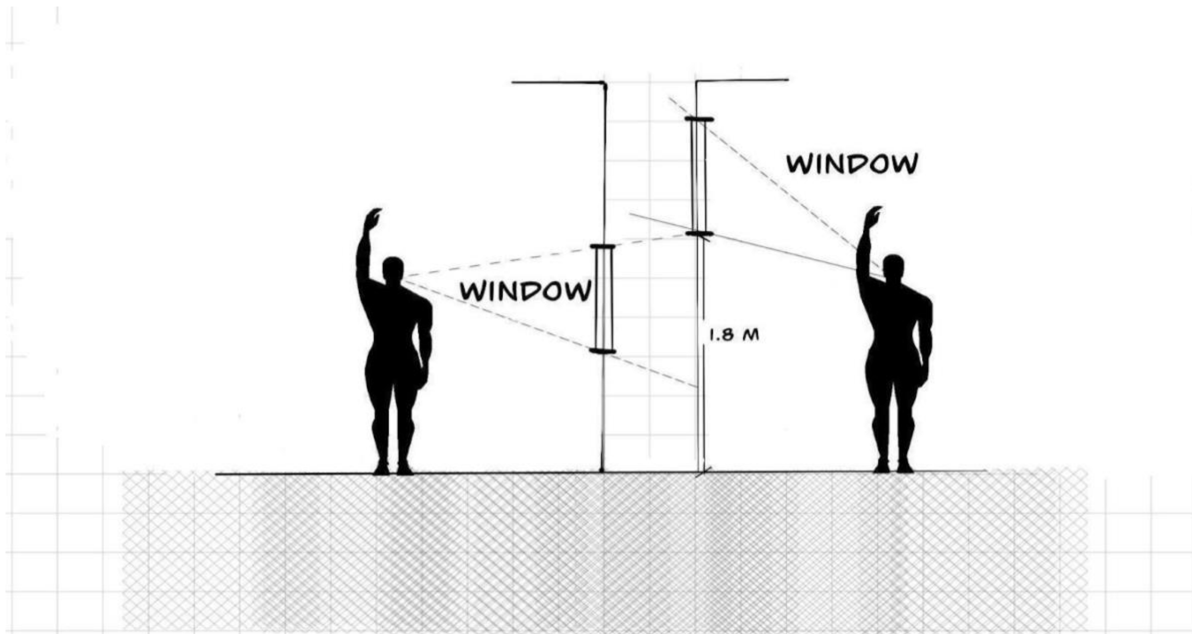


Figure 38. The process of window placement followed in camps to guarantee privacy among residents (Alqub, 2022).

Respect

Privacy

Privacy

Connectivity

Modesty

Aesthetic Appreciation

Figure 39. A set of photos that shows a value and corresponding *home-making* practices, Amman, Jordan (Alqub, 2022).

These material *home-making* practices reflect refugees' intent to improve the harsh living conditions of their camp into a more home-like environment. Figure 40 showcases examples of architectural appropriation that are highly influenced by the vernacular architecture of Palestine (e.g., public expansion, *Mastabeh*, *Saddeh*, and urban pockets). These examples are material expressions and robust attempts at creating a sense of home. Refugees extend the geography of the homeland through architectural practices in a new and unfamiliar space. Similarly, Figure 41 depicts public physical symbolic scenes, such as paintings and murals, from the three camps. These expressions reveal refugees' attachment to their homeland, often conveying political affiliations, and turn the camp space into an intimate and meaningful environment.

The use of arches, fences, and columns is characteristic of the architectural style prevalent in Palestine

The use of entrance patio is a prevalent architectural practice in Palestine

“Saddeh” is a storage area in the kitchen, commonly, found in the Palestinian villages

Refugees utilized zinc sheets to connect two housing units, thereby creating additional usable space

A “Mastabeh” is a stone bench that is typically attached to the house

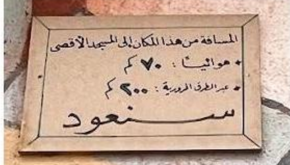
The personalized entrances and the use of ceiled roofs revitalize specific values within the Palestinian community

Figure 40. Examples of architectural appropriation as material *home-making* (e.g., *Saddeh*, *Mastabeh*, patio), Amman, Jordan (Alqub, 2022).

The historical map of Palestine, as represented by refugees, depicting a unified Palestinian state with no divisions

Written on the walls: "In our eyes, the camp's alleys are more beautiful than the city lights"

A depiction of "Abu Arab", the iconic poet of the Palestinian camp and the Palestinian revolution



The inscription on the wall reads: "Approximately 70 km from this point to Al-Aqsa Mosque (Jerusalem) - we will return."

Written on the wall is a well-known quote by Mahmoud Darwish, the Palestinian national poet and author: "On this land [Palestine], we have that which makes life worth living"

A drawing depicting a key symbolizing the right to return and the perceived role of the UN from the perspective of refugees

Inscribed on the wall: "Here is Gaza, here is the resistance, here is the resilience" - an implicit message illustrating the transformation of the camp into a home by perceiving it as a representation of homeland cities

A mural depicting Palestinian cities alongside a drawing of a symbolic home key, representing the right to return

An illustrative depiction that unifies the maps of Jordan and Palestine, symbolizing the national unity between the two entities.

The three photos below depict Palestinian prisoners in Israeli prisons, specifically those held without administrative trials for political purposes. These images highlight the interconnectedness between the Palestinian camp and the ongoing events in Palestine.

Figure 41. Paintings and murals from the three camps, Amman, Jordan (Alqub, 2022).

4.5.3.2. Non-material *Home-making* (Oral History/In Heart/Transcending Materiality)

Home-making encompasses not only the tangible material practices but also the intangible meanings and stories associated with one's homeland. Surprisingly, the non-material aspect of *home-making* was found to be just as prevalent, if not more so, than the material aspect in this research. This may be due, in part, to the limited economic means available to refugees (Al-Husn, personal communication, December 20th, 2021). J. Shatarat, a former UNRWA worker and second-generation refugee from Baqa'a, expressed his thoughts on this matter:

> “I was born and raised in Baqa’a camp, but I had to leave it and live nearby. However, I am strongly attached to the camp, to its people and streets. I can't stay away from it. Thus, you would find me here every day, walking around, visiting my mom and family members. I see the camp as a transitional stage; a tunnel through which a glimmer of hope is seen. Its perseverance until the moment is a reminder of who we are, where we came from, and why we live here. I view it as a passage that starts here and ends in our homeland in Palestine. Even though I am a second-generation refugee who didn’t get the chance to see Palestine personally, I was able to construct an image of my town through the narratives of my grandparents. Therefore, I see the camp as an extension to Palestine that I didn’t get to see or live in. The camp is my “Palestine”; It's a reservoir of my childhood memory and the source of my social and emotional life.” (J. Shatarat, Baqa’a camp, personal communication, January 2022)

I vividly recall these words, which are saturated with emotions of hope, pride, and nostalgia. This excerpt highlights the role of first-generation narratives and knowledge in constructing refugee identity, especially for those born in exile and trapped in a frozen phase of time (pre-1948/pre-1967). The camp space has produced a sense of attachment to the homeland, creating a sort of ambivalence in refugees' attitudes towards the camp. On one hand, they long for the end of the camp, seeing it as a transitional stage on their journey to return. On the other hand, they have developed a sense of belonging to it, as reflected in the interviewee's reference to it as "my Palestine," drawing a clear connection between the camp and home. However, these thoughts

have not been translated materially, and thus remain stored intangibly in the refugees' memories and stories.

Shatarat's definition of home reflects the logic of *assemblage*, as he sees a home as a multisensorial compilation of all the homes he has known in his life (Palestine, the camp, his new house outside the camp), transcending the physical conception of home (the dwelling) realm. He acknowledges that the camp exists as a direct consequence of the loss of Palestine and exemplifies a transitional stage or passage, with return meaning the end of the camp. Yet, for him, home or home-*making* at the present moment is the product of all these networks and factors (e.g., oral history, narratives, life experiences). At a later point in time, the definition of home will change based on new factors (geopolitical, physical, etc.). Shatarat conceptualizes the camp as a tunnel, dark and ambiguous, yet with an end that must be reached.

The word "transitional" was used repeatedly by Shatarat and other interviewees to describe the existence of the camp as temporary. It is evident that for Shatarat and other interviewees, the camp represents a stage of transition, emphasizing the core of *assemblage* theory in which *assemblages* are contingent as well as time- and place-specific.

In most interviews, refugees spoke at length about the appearance of their homes in Palestine, almost as if they were standing in front of them. Interviewees who talked about their former homes in Palestine were mainly first-generation refugees who had witnessed the construction process themselves. Surprisingly, one of the interviewees' sons (also a refugee) was able to remind his father of some of the details that had escaped him while describing his home back in Palestine. Although the son had never seen that home or visited Palestine extensively, he had

been told the story several times, allowing him to recall it in detail. This practice of passing down knowledge from one generation to the next, which occurs beyond physical space, is called oral history. It is a shared visual memory that helps to conserve and sustain a national identity and heritage.

Interestingly, many refugees expressed that material *home-making* is not a reliable indicator of one's patriotism or loyalty to their cause or homeland. S. Araisheh, a refugee in his sixties, was particularly clear in his response to the question, "How do you express your longing for Palestine and attachment to your homeland in your daily material *home-making* practices?" He said:

> “Palestine is bigger than any material expression! It is engraved in our hearts and minds; no material manifestation would even come close to what Palestine means to us. I don’t say material reflection is worthless, but what matters is our set of beliefs, motives and inner attachments that can make changes on the ground, in relation to our cause. I believe that considering only the material aspect of *home-making* might not be able to fairly measure how much refugees are attached to their homeland, and how they re-make Palestine in the camp. Especially that most of the camp’s residents are economically incapable. And such material-cultural items/tools are relatively expensive [if bought] or require time and effort [if entirely handmade]. Thus, don’t expect to find many of them in the homes of refugees here, who barely can afford their daily basic needs.” (S. Araisheh, personal communication, Baqa’a camp, January 5th, 2022).

S. Araisheh presents a realistic perspective on camp dwelling and the enthusiasm shown by his son during the interview was a true reflection of the father's words and beliefs. In this conversation, S. Araisheh highlights the diverse connections, relationships, and constraints that shape refugees' decisions regarding their mode of *home-making.* It is not a decision made purely on individual preferences but is instead the result of multiple global and local networks and factors (e.g., the Palestinian cause) that are inseparably interconnected.

Before moving on to the discussion section, I would like to conclude this part with a photo from UNRWA's archival photo collection in the book *I Would Have Smiled: Photographing the Palestinian Refugee Experience*, which highlights how *home-making* in the camp operates as *assemblages*. The book showcases archival photos from the *Nakba*[22] onwards, and the caption under a particular photo caught my attention (Figure42).

Dheisheh refugee camp, near Bethlehem (West Bank).
Subhi Mohaizin's family has lived in the Dheisheh refugee camp near Bethlehem since 1950. For 16 years, the entire family was lodged in a single one room, in which they slept and ate. With Subhi's help, they added eventually another room. Subhi graduated from UNRWA's Wadi Seer Vocational Training Centre and went to work with an oil company in Kuwait. He began to send money home regularly supporting his family and helping his younger brother, Mahmud, attend university in Yugoslavia.

Figure 42. A photo of a family in Dheisheh refugee camp (West Bank) (Salti, 2009).

This caption summarizes how the *assemblage* of human and non-human elements and networks worked together to shape the process of *home-making* for this family, both in terms of the evolution of their home and the camp as a whole. The fact that at least five family members lived in a single room provided by UNRWA for 16 years, while the eldest son trained at UNRWA's

vocational training center, highlights UNRWA as a significant factor in this *assemblage*. Under these conditions, the eldest son was able to extend the boundaries of the camp by working for an oil company in Kuwait. This led to a flow of money from Kuwait to the camp in the West Bank, which represents a non-human flow in this *assemblage* (circulation of money). This money allowed the family to thrive, adding extra rooms and enabling their younger son to attend university in Yugoslavia. This *assemblage* created new networks with Yugoslavia, extending the boundaries of the camp's *assemblages*. Thus, the *home-making* process for this family was the result of a combination of tangible and intangible factors that transcended the camp space.

Having introduced, commented on, and analyzed the interview excerpts, digital illustrations, and illustrative sketches and photos, the following section discusses the study's key findings. This discussion aims to reflect on the findings using an interdisciplinary lens that combines social, architectural, urban, and geographical sciences to contribute to analyses of camp dwellings as *assemblages* and the contingent agency of refugees within them.

4.6. Discussion

In this section, I emphasize the significance of understanding the dynamic and network-driven nature of *home-making* practices in refugee camps through the lens of *assemblage*. I highlight the most effective factors in these *assemblages* while discussing the agency of refugees and the factors that delineate its extent. Moreover, I discuss the material and non-material categories of refugees' *home-making* and the factors or networks that account for the variations in these practices among the cases studied. To further elucidate the impact of these factors and networks on refugees' *home-making assemblages*, I offer examples of how global networks have

influenced these *assemblages*, such as the example of the modernist movement, which played a pivotal role in shaping these practices in camps.

The study's findings support Rubenstein's argument (2001) that home exceeds a mere physical structure or geographic location. Thus, viewing *home-making* practices as *assemblage* formations redirects attention to the dynamics, factors, and networks that influence *home-making* in a refugee camp. Although existing literature refers to *home-making* in the context of refugee camps as multi-scalar and changeable (Oclay, 2023), it does not decode the factors responsible for this constant change of the home space in the camp. This study aimed to uncover these factors and determined that economic and political/regulatory factors are the most potent non-human factors in the *assemblages* that determine the *home-making* mode adopted by refugees. These factors have weakened refugees' power and control over their *home-making* activities, dictating what is and is not permitted.

One example of political/regulatory factors' impact on *home-making* practices is the application of housing policies in refugee camps, where the architecture profession is utilized to enforce housing policies and regulations that are influenced by specific ideological discourses. In this context, architecture serves as a powerful tool for shaping the built environment of the camp, influencing its design, layout, and overall spatial arrangement. These policies and practices are driven by various ideological discourses, such as security and control (evident in the implementation of strict camp layout regulations) and humanitarianism and temporary shelter (reflected in the emphasis on cost-effective solutions). The a*ssemblage* framework allows for a comprehension of this scenario, particularly the temporal nature of changes in policies linked to specific periods and driven by collective pressure from the refugee community. We can perceive

the reciprocal impact of the relationships and networks among the components comprising these *assemblages* and how they are contingent upon temporal interactions and conditions. The current state of home-making *assemblages* is the outcome of continuous interactions between different factors. On one hand, there are regulating policies or external forces that shape the conditions and constraints within which refugees must navigate. On the other hand, there are the reactions and practices of the refugees themselves in response to these policies. This highlights the dynamic nature of this relationship. The policies that were initially intended to shape and control the living conditions of the refugees eventually become influenced and shaped by the very actions and practices of the refugees themselves.

Economic factors are as significant as regulatory factors in influencing camp residents' decisions regarding the mode of *home-making,* whether material or non-material. Existing literature primarily focuses on material aspects of *home-making* in refugee camps (Dudley, 2011; Smith, 2016; Albadra & Hart, 2018). However, this study aims to emphasize the equal importance of the non-material. In relation to the role of economic factors in refugees' home-making, individuals with a stronger financial situation have more opportunities to express their *home-making* preferences through material means. Consequently, those with weaker financial situations tended to manifest their *home-making* practices through non-material means, such as oral history and narratives. Nonetheless, the agency of refugees transcends both regulatory and economic factors, as evidenced by "acts of rebellion" (Sanyal, 2011, p. 877) manifested through *home-making* practices (i.e., architectural appropriation). These practices serve as a form of resistance against the modes of control and confinement imposed upon them. However, that

does not mean that the agency of refugees is free of constraints. In fact, the study has illustrated how agency is shaped by factors that result in distinctive expressions of power in the three cases.

The agency of refugees, in both material and non-material forms, was empirically observed across the three cases. However, the agency of refugees was shaped by social power relations, which in turn influenced their sense of autonomy. Distinct variations in social power relations were identified among the three cases, with Baqa'a camp exhibiting stronger power relations compared to the other cases, while Talbiyeh camp had the weakest. This is manifested in the emergence of a number of public figures (e.g., ministers) hailing from Baqa'a camp, which has consequently resulted in the creation of strong connections and rendered Baqa'a more commercially prosperous than the other cases (DPA member, personal communication, Baqa’a camp, January, 2022). These variations impacted how the agency of refugees was expressed in each case, resulting in distinct material and non-material *home-making* practices.

Material *home-making* practices, such as architecture and material culture, were more prominent in Al-Husn camp than in Talbiyeh, which can be attributed to its comparatively poorer economic conditions. 23% of refugees residing in Al-Husn camp have an income below the national poverty line of JD 814, whereas the corresponding figure for Talbiyeh is 28% (Tiltnes & Zhang, 2013). On the other hand, non-material *home-making* practices, such as oral history, were more noticeable in Baqa'a camp. This finding can be attributed to several factors, such like the higher educational level of Baqa'a residents compared to Talbiyeh, for example, the percentage of children aged four and five enrolled in kindergarten in Baqa’a is 60% compared to 38% in Talbiyeh (Tiltnes & Zhang, 2013). Overall, these findings highlight the complex interplay between

social power relations, economic conditions, and the diverse expressions of agency through material and non-material *home-making* practices among the three cases.

The application of *assemblage* theory in analyzing home and *home-making* practices has proven to be a valuable and effective method for understanding the overall context. McFarlane's (2011) definition of urbanism—"processes that are defined less by a pre-given property and more by the *assemblages* they enter and reconstitute" (p. 653)—aligns with the observations made in the case studies. This perspective expands the potentialities of a given space, extending its spatial capabilities and transcending the confines of traditional urban planning practices that are often limited to professional interventions. By embracing *assemblage* theory, the field of urban planning can recognize the essential role of local communities as key shapers of the spaces they inhabit. This approach represents a democratization process, where a series of trial-and-error experiments are not only valid but also welcomed. It acknowledges the dynamic and participatory nature of urban spaces, allowing for diverse perspectives and practices to contribute to the ongoing evolution of the built environment.

Within a context characterized by logics of control and humanitarianism, often attributed to the host state or humanitarian agencies (Agier, 2010; Ticktin, 2011), adopting an *assemblage* perspective on *home-making* that acknowledges the role of refugees portrays the space as intimate and familiar. This approach challenges the dominant model of power that centers camp authorities' role as the sole determinant of *home-making*, while undermining the agency of refugees. The *assemblage* approach examines the dynamics of power and agency. For instance, Foucault's work (1980) highlights the dynamics between the powerful and the powerless, revealing that the powerful are not as omnipotent as they perceive themselves to be, and the

powerless are not as devoid of agency as they might believe. This raises questions about agency that transcend this dichotomy.

Likewise, a significant realization from my fieldwork is that refugees possess far more agency and power than they realize, having observed how agency is manifested through their *home-making* practices. This can be attributed to the perpetuation of a "refugee mentality" instilled through narratives originating from the host community or prevailing worldwide stigmas (Malkki, 2002). In the aftermath of World War II, there was a surge in literature discussing the refugee as a distinct social category. It was also during this time the establishment of the United Nations (UN), the Palestinian crisis, the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, and the emergence of modern architecture all occurred. At first glance, these events may seem disconnected and incongruous. However, adopting the *assemblage* approach reveals their inseparability and elucidates the interrelations and influences that shape and surround these events.

As an architect who seeks to integrate the fields of architecture, social science, and human geography into a unified *assemblage*, I seek to discern the connection between the modernism movement and the initial layout of the UNRWA camps during that period. The establishment of these camps coincided with the peak of modernity in the post-1948 era, characterized by modern architecture's distinct values of modularity, mass production, efficiency, and repetitive patterns. Prominent modern architects such as Le Corbusier, Mies van der Rohe, Walter Gropius, and Frank Lloyd Wright embodied these values. However, these modernist principles faced scrutiny with the advent of new advancements in science, technology, and computer science during the 1960s. During this time, a significant critique of modernism emerged through the works of architects such as Scott Brown, Robert Venturi, Jane Jacobs, Christopher Alexander, and Kevin Lynch. They

criticized the formality and lack of diversity inherent in modern architecture. For instance, Alexander (1977) offers a critical perspective on modern architecture in his seminal work, *A Pattern Language: towns, buildings, construction*. In *The Timeless Way of Building* (1979), Alexander argues that modern buildings lacked the inherent beauty found in traditional buildings. He contended that traditional buildings exhibit a spontaneous and gradual adaptation to their surrounding context, reflecting the changing circumstances of their environment. In contrast, modern buildings are often imposed universally, disregarding the diverse contextual forces found in different locations. Scholars such as Lynch (1960), Jacobs (1961), and Alexander (1977) emphasized the importance of *piecemeal growth* in the built environment as they critiqued modernism.

This discussion of modern architecture and its critiques serves two purposes. First, it highlights the connection between the design of UNRWA camps and the prevailing values of modern architecture at that time. The values of modularity, repetitiveness, efficiency, mass production, and formality were evident in the layout of UNRWA camps. These values do not imply that modernism was entirely inappropriate in this context; however, they were implemented to serve other objectives. For instance, the utilization of repetitive patterns, as exemplified in the "dense grid of small units" (Feigis, 2016, p. 151), typically employed in the initial camp layout, serves security purposes (Al-Homoud & Samarah, 2022). However, modularity and rigidity posed obstacles to the residents' ability to modify their living spaces. Thus, it can be concluded that the application of modernist values in the design of UNRWA camps acted as obstacles to other values such as agency, flexibility, and potential transformation. This is not to claim that these latter values were completely absent in the camp setting, but rather that the implementation of

modernist values in UNRWA housing units limited to some extent the application of flexibility, agency, and transformative potential. Marji & Kohout (2022) claim that the refugee camps, as settlements planned by top-down actors and governed by rigid regulations, embody spaces that share a "similar picture to Modernist planning principles of strict, formal gridlines," as they further elaborate:

> "The refugee camp is designed with that purpose in mind while also maintaining the temporary structures and preventing any alterations or changes by the residents in order to suppress the idea of settling into a permanent space. It is not designed to be comfortable nor liveable, only "habitable"" (Marji & Kohout, 2022, p. 330)

Second, these criticisms of modernism call for a piecemeal approach to the growth of the built environment. This perspective, along with Alexander's emphasis on context and place-specific determinants, aligns with the *assemblage* approach, which views the built environment as an ongoing process that gradually responds to changing circumstances in a harmonious and balanced manner. The convergence of these ideas emphasizes the importance of understanding the dynamic nature of the built environment and the need for adaptive and context-sensitive approaches to architecture and urban planning.

Ultimately, refugees have defied these imposed values by exercising agency and personalizing the rigid modular units provided by UNRWA. While they may perceive themselves as powerless, every home within the camp reflects the story of a resilient refugee and an active co-agent in shaping the camp space. Despite their own acknowledgment of powerlessness, the *home-making* practices of refugees serve as a testament to their inherent strength and agency.

4.7. Conclusion

Grounded in the framework of *assemblage* theory, this chapter examines *home-making* practices in refugee camps as complex *assemblages*. It transcends the limiting approach that attributes the construction of the camp space solely to higher authorities, representing it as large-scale humanitarian space or a space of protection (Agier, 2010, Ticktin, 2011). Instead, it adopts a bottom-up perspective that recognizes the pivotal role of refugees in transforming the unfamiliar camp into a place they can call home. This perspective is facilitated by the *assemblage* approach, which considers the involvement of both human and non-human components, networks and flows. The study identifies two distinct types of *home-making* practices: material and non-material. Photos, illustrations, and interviews with refugees highlight their agency in shaping their home-Home-HOME (Brun & Fábos, 2015). However, it is crucial to acknowledge that the forms this agency takes are conditioned and influenced by the specific circumstances of each camp (e.g., educational level, socio-economic factors, political connections), as well as other external factors (e.g., global networks such as modernism).

Therefore, it is evident that refugees are not passive actors, contrary to their portrayal in much of the existing literature. The ways they express agency and engage in *home-making* practices are not uniform across different camps or even within the same camp, particularly when certain groups hold socio-economic and political advantages. However, within the framework of *assemblage* thinking, it is important to recognize that these different forms of *home-making* can intersect and mutually influence each other. Therefore, future studies could further explore the points of convergence and overlap between material and non-material *home-making* practices in refugee camps. Further research could also contribute to understanding of how power

differentials shape the potential and barriers for defining the configuration of home-Home-HOME in spaces of waiting.

Manuscript Presentation

The manuscript titled "Assembling Environmental Sustainability in Refugee Camps through Refugees' *Home-making* Practices" constitutes the third part of a dissertation that includes three manuscripts investigating the construction of the camp temporally and spatially, and refugees' agency in shaping camp developments. This manuscript targets architects, environmentalists, urban designers, and policymakers who are interested in topics including the survival of refugee camps, sustainability and *home-making*. The intended journals for publications are the Journal of *Urban Affairs*, the *Journal of Refugee Studies*, and *Sustainability.*

The previous article discusses how refugees in camps are able to create a sense of intimacy and familiarity through their *home-making* practices. This challenges the traditional notion of camps as purely humanitarian spaces run by higher authorities, with refugees portrayed as helpless recipients of aid. Instead, the establishment of camps involves various relationships, networks, factors and actors, including the active involvement of refugees. Thus, it becomes essential to examine how specific dynamics and factors influence the camp's urban system, transforming it from a temporary refuge into a more permanent settlement, leading to resource challenges that refugees must cope with due to the camp's prolonged and unplanned existence. In this context, my research investigates the survival practices adopted by refugees in these challenging circumstances while simultaneously promoting environmental sustainability. In this manuscript, I employ *assemblage* theory (Deleuze & Guattari, 1987; De Landa, 2006; McFarlane, 2009; Dovey, 2010) and the concept of the *Environmentalism of the Poor* (EOP) (Guha, 2002; Nixon, 2011) in exploring the questions of survival and sustainability among those in three Palestinian refugee camps in Jordan.

The manuscript argues that refugees often employ sustainable practices out of necessity to survive, and their contributions to sustainability are often overlooked in existing literature, such as the work of Wardeh & Marques (2021) and Alshawawreh et al. (2020). By broadening the scope of sustainability to include refugee-led sustainable practices, we can challenge the exclusive understanding of sustainability and recognize the critical role refugees play in promoting environmental sustainability. To conduct this study, the manuscript utilizes various research methods, such as site visits, participant observation, interviews with camp residents and officials, along with methods of archival research.

This manuscript aligns with the primary research objective of the dissertation, which is to examine the networks and flows that contribute to the spatial and temporal construction of the refugee camp, with a particular emphasis on refugees' contribution to environmental sustainability. More specifically, it explores refugees' sustainable *home-making* practices within the camp, which are crucial to their survival and contribute to the overall environmental sustainability.

Chapter 5 | Third Manuscript

Assembling Environmental Sustainability in Refugee Camps through Refugees' *Home-making* Practices

Abstract

Much of the existing research on sustainability in refugee camps often examines the concept through the lens of institutional change that overlooks the potential of refugees' actions and initiatives as crucial in achieving sustainability. In this work, I aim to broaden the scope of the drivers of sustainability, within this context, by incorporating the active participation of refugees themselves. More specifically, I seek to explore the extent to which refugees' *home-making* practices, aimed at securing their livelihoods, promote environmental sustainability. In this study, I focus on two kinds of *home-making* practices: dwelling adaptations and home economics practices. In examining the survival strategies of marginalized populations, the concept of *Environmentalism of the Poor* (EOP) (Guha, 2002; Nixon, 2011) is of particular relevance. EOP investigates how the poor tend to adopt more sustainable practices out of necessity, as a means of struggling to survive. Refugees, despite not necessarily being poor, often lack certain social and economic privileges/rights held by non-refugee citizens. Drawing on *Environmentalism of the Poor* (EOP) and *assemblage* theory (Deleuze & Guattari, 1987; De Landa, 2006; McFarlane, 2009; Dovey, 2010), this article aims to explore a bottom-up perspective on sustainable practices, while acknowledging their inherently political nature. Through empirical analysis of three Palestinian camps in Jordan, Al-Husn, Baqa'a, and Talbiyeh, this study examines the flows and networks of contestation and collaboration within and beyond the camps' boundaries. The research argues that refugees' survival *home-making* practices, conceptualized as *assemblages*, play a pivotal role in promoting environmental sustainability in the camp. To investigate these practices, I employ a methodology that incorporates archival and empirical research. This includes methods of site visits, direct observation, interviews with camp residents and officials, and handmade graphic journaling.

5.1. Introduction

> "(...) sustainability (is) used as a buzzword. For 90 percent of the world, sustainability is a matter of survival." (Sinclair, 2001)[23]

When the term "sustainable" is used to describe a space, it is typically associated with ideas of long-term planning and well-designed environments. In the context of refugee camps, the concept of sustainability has been explored in diverse ways within the existing literature. For instance, scholars have examined sustainability in refugee camps by focusing on the advancement of sustainable shelter design (Haque, 2019; Pomponi et al., 2019; Alshawawreh et al., 2020), as well as through the evaluation of "energy use and indoor environmental performance" in refugee shelters (Ibrahim et al., 2023, p. 1). Other scholars have linked sustainability to the fulfillment of the United Nations 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development,[24] which involves a framework of Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) involving, shelter, education, and energy (Wardeh & Marques, 2021). Such examples from the literature on sustainability within camp setting approach the topic primarily through the lens of institutional change, with a tendency to emphasize sustainability as a proactive strategy driven by professionals (such as governments, planners, policy-makers, etc.). In doing so, these perspectives often overlook the significant potential of refugees' actions and initiatives that play a crucial role in achieving sustainability within the camp. Hence, in this study, I seek to illuminate the often-overlooked practices implemented by refugees to sustain and secure their livelihoods within the camp and broaden an understanding of how sustainability is practiced from the bottom up. Given the multifaceted nature of sustainability, this research focuses specifically on environmental sustainability. Within this context, the discussion will center on refugees' *home-*

making practices, highlighting their relevance within the camp setting while concurrently promoting environmental sustainability.

In this study, the term *home-making* refers broadly to practices that alter the material and symbolic qualities of physical dwellings (or houses) to transform them into homes (see Chapter Four). The term *survival home-making* practices refers more specifically to the set of *home-making* practices that produce environmental benefits, with an emphasis on practices of dwelling adaptation and home economics. The research objective is to foreground the role of refugees' survival practices in environmentally sustaining the camp.

I begin this chapter with a review of existing studies that situate this study in relation to questions of sustainability and refugee agency. In the first part of the literature review, I explore how refugee camps often encounter significant resource-related challenges, leading to unsanitary conditions and limited access to livelihood opportunities. The literature sheds light on the complex resource challenges within camps and their environmental implications (Adisa, 1996; Black & Sessay, 1998b; Crabtree, 2010; Tiltnes & Zhang, 2013; Fisher et al., 2017; Siklawi, 2019; Wardeh & Marques, 2021). I then discuss existing literature that explores the concept of sustainability, which is often conceptualized with multiple pillars (Brundtland, 1987; Hawkes, 2001; Murphy, 2012; Hajirasouli & Kumarasuriyar, 2016). Subsequently, I narrow the focus of the discussion to examine literature that specifically addresses sustainability within refugee camps (Escamilla & Harbert, 2015; Leknes-Kilmork & Gillebo, 2018; Haque, 2019; Alshawawreh et al., 2020; Warden & Marques, 2021; Jaradat & Beunders, 2021).

This discussion leads to the introduction of the research's theoretical framework. I employ the concept of *Environmentalism of the Poor* (EOP) (Guha, 2002; Nixon, 2011), which highlights how

individuals experiencing poverty, as part of their struggle for survival, will often adopt environmentally sustainable practices out of necessity. In addition to EOP, I draw upon *assemblage* theory (Deleuze & Guattari, 1987; De Landa, 2006; McFarlane, 2009; Dovey, 2010) to examine refugees' survival practices within the camp. *Assemblage* theory conceptualizes a practice as fluid and dynamic, emerging from the interactions and interplay of human and non-human components and flows, transcending spatial limits. It emphasizes the relationships between these constituent parts rather than focusing solely on the parts themselves (Dovey, 2010), and its emphasis on the relationships (or *'assemblages'*) challenges conceptions of power as absolute or uni-directional, opening space for a bottom-up perspective on camp development. The section that follows (section 5.5) presents the empirical findings of the analysis. I organize the discussion of refugees' sustainable *home-making* practices found in the case studies into three groups: urban agriculture, alternative energy practices, and waste management practices. Within each group, I choose one example and offer a comprehensive explanation of how it functions as an *assemblage*. The chapter concludes with reflections on how professionals in charge of camp resources can leverage the study results. It proposes creating collaborative opportunities between institutions and refugees' activities to enhance living conditions in refugee camps.

5.2. Literature review

5.2.1. Resource Challenges in Refugee Camps

It is evident that refugee camps worldwide share a common characteristic—they were initially designed as temporary solutions (UNHCR, 2007).[25] However, studies have revealed that the

average lifespan of a refugee camp exceeds 17 years (Loescher & Milner, 2005). This prolonged existence raises questions about the challenges these camps have encountered over time.

Scholars discuss how many refugee camps face resource challenges (Adisa, 1996; Crabtree, 2010; Tiltnes & Zhang, 2013; Siklawi, 2019; Fisher et al., 2017). For example, Adisa (1996) examines how Rwandan refugees in Tanzania face various resource challenges, including limited food, fuel, and construction materials resources. Similarly, Tiltnes & Zhang (2013) provide examples on such challenges faced in Palestinian refugee camps in Jordan, including: "lower income, larger households, substandard housing, lower educational attainment, perceived poorer health, and heavier reliance on UNRWA and other relief services" (p. 7).

Palestinian refugee camps in Lebanon have also faced substantial challenges such as a lack of job opportunities, inadequate education and healthcare, and substandard infrastructure (Siklawi, 2019). When comparing Palestinian refugees who live outside of camps to those residing within camps, it is evident that the latter group experiences higher rates of unemployment, lower income, larger household sizes, increased instances of inadequate housing, and less access to health insurance (Tiltnes & Zhang, 2013). This can be attributed to the fact that as protracted refugee situations endure, the insufficiency of basic needs or resources increases due to the gradual decrease in humanitarian relief over time (Crabtree, 2010).

Several studies note that when a large number of refugees migrate to a particular area, it can significantly strain natural resources, resulting in notable environmental implications or degradation (Black & Sessay, 1998; Adisa, 1996). Protracted refugee situations can also result in other negative consequences, such as the emergence of slum-like spaces (Sanyal, 2014; Earle, 2016; Wardeh & Marques, 2021) with highly limited access to livelihood opportunities.

Sanyal (2014) establishes links between refugee camps and urban spaces characterized by marginality, such as slums or squatter settlements, as their “spatio-temporal conditions mimic that of slum” (p.559). Sanyal (2014) sheds light on the transformation of refugee camps into slums or squatter settlements due to refugees' lack of access to essential services and livelihood opportunities. In the face of long-term displacement, residents in camps often employ unconventional means to fulfill their needs and adapt to their circumstances, such as unauthorized expansion of living spaces and the emergence of informal economies (Sanyal, 2014). These practices result in deteriorating the camp environment (i.e., unstable structures, cramped pathways, poorly maintained infrastructure), morphing camps into spaces characterized by inadequate living conditions.

Refugees have been viewed as "exceptional resource degraders" of the host communities (Black & Sessay, 1998b, p. 31). For example, in Kenya’s Dadaab camp, refugees have been perceived as contributing to the environmental degradation of areas surrounding their camp through activities such as overharvesting of wood for fire and shelter construction, over-stocking of domestic livestock, and excessive extraction of groundwater, resulting in conflicts with the host community and authorities (Kumssa, 2014). This becomes particularly relevant for host states, especially in developing countries, where resources are limited and governments aim to privilege long-standing citizens.

This raises questions regarding how refugees can secure livelihoods in these settings and how associated environmental implications can be managed. Adisa (1996) explores some strategies employed by refugees to compensate for resource scarcity within the camp and the resulting environmental impacts. In his study, Adisa (1996) describes how Rwandan refugees in Tanzania

were directed by relief agencies to settle in local farms and how they resorted to cutting down coffee and banana trees to construct shelters and obtain fuel, as the aid agencies provided them with limited assistance (e.g., plastic sheeting for shelter construction (p. 327)).

These examples highlight refugees' potential for sustaining their livelihood while adapting to challenging circumstances. Although these adaptations assist refugees in meeting their immediate needs, there are instances where such strategies can also contribute to the long-term environmental sustainability and security of their livelihoods in the camp, particularly in situations of prolonged exile, as this study will empirically illustrate.

5.2.2. The Notion of Sustainability

Global development agendas have recognized the importance of sustainability as a key objective in addressing socio-economic and environmental challenges in the city (Valencia et al., 2019). The United Nations 2030 agenda for sustainable development centers around the principle that "no one is left behind" and encompasses 17 sustainable development goals that aim to build sustainable resilient communities (Collodi et al., 2021).

Numerous studies and literature have extensively discussed sustainability and its practical applications (Brundtland, 1987; Wilkinson et al., 2001; Vallance et al., 2011; Gollander-Jensen, 2012; Murphy, 2012; Purvis et al., 2018). Brundtland's report (1987) stands out as the first to define sustainable development within the UN World Commission on Environment and Development (WCED). From the report titled Our Common Future, the typical definition of sustainability is derived as follows "meeting the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs" (White, 2013, p. 215).

Sustainability is often associated with environmental-ecological systems, however achieving sustainability requires the consideration and balanced fulfillment of three pillars: environmental, social (including cultural sustainability), and economic sustainability ("What is Sustainability", n.d.). *Environmental Sustainability* focuses on the preservation of natural resources and the management of consumption and production patterns that can either positively or negatively impact future generations, based on current consumption trends (Leknes-Kilmork & Gillebo, 2018). *Economic Sustainability* involves "maintaining economic progress, yet at the same time, protecting long term value of resources" (Leknes-Kilmork & Gillebo, 2018, p. 14). *Social Sustainability* encompasses a holistic concept that promotes social connectivity and solidarity (Alshawawreh et al., 2020).

Some studies highlight additional paradigms of sustainability that propose the inclusion of four or five pillars. Advocates of the four-pillar approach have emphasized the importance of a separate cultural pillar (Hawkes, 2001; Scerri & James, 2010; UCLG, 2010). It should be noted that the three-pillar paradigm already encompasses cultural sustainability as part of the social pillar rather than an independent pillar itself (Murphy, 2012; Hajirasouli & Kumarasuriyar, 2016). Other scholars have taken it a step further and introduced a fifth pillar of sustainability related to geo-strategic security, in reference to "peace and sustainable stability" (Bervar & Bertoncelj, 2016, p. 244).

5.2.3. Sustainability within Refugee Camps

According to Wardeh and Marques (2021), there is insufficient research and awareness regarding the planning of refugee camps, highlighting the need to identify sustainable solutions to prevent

the transformation of camps into unsafe informal settlements. Similarly, Al-Husban & Adams (2016) have emphasized the need to reconsider the current camp model, which carries connotations of humanitarian assistance and enclosure, and instead adopt sustainable models that foster long-term capacities. The existing body of literature has addressed the topic of sustainability in the context of camps, with contributions from various scholars (Escamilla & Harbert, 2015; Leknes-Kilmork & Gillebo, 2018; Haque, 2019; Alshawawreh et al., 2020; Warden & Marques, 2021; Jaradat & Beunders, 2021).

Leknes-Kilmork & Gillebo (2018) claim that a sustainable future for refugee camps is achievable through “green infrastructure intervention.” The authors approach sustainability through the lens of landscape architecture, arguing that incorporating green infrastructure can improve the well-being of those living in refugee camps. Leknes-Kilmork and Gillebo adopt Benedict and McMahon's definition (2006, p.1) of green infrastructure as an "interconnected network of natural areas or other open spaces that conserves natural ecosystems values and functions... and provide a wide array of benefits to people and wildlife." However, they expand upon this definition by including the human-made element of green infrastructure. Leknes-Kilmork & Gillebo (2018) propose that green infrastructure can offer benefits to refugees and potentially alleviate challenges in extreme circumstances such as refugee camps. Their study demonstrates that green infrastructure enhances the physical and mental health of refugees and improves social capital, which refers to the networks, relationships and norms of trust and reciprocity, yielding to social resources, benefits, and opportunities.

By applying the paradigm of the three pillars of sustainability to refugee camps, a noticeable overlap emerges (Alshawawreh et al., 2020). Alshawawreh et al. (2020) provide the example of

social sustainability, which often overlaps with environmental and economic dimensions of sustainability, such as the use of local materials that not only satisfies social familiarity within a given community but also fulfills the requirements of environmental and economic aspects of sustainability.

Drawing upon a similar approach to Alshawawreh et al., (2020), that emphasizes the significance of a “successful” shelter design for achieving sustainability, Escamilla & Harbert (2015) approach the topic by conducting a “sustainability assessment” of shelters. This assessment focuses on various aspects, including the transportation and production of construction materials, as well as the process of shelter construction. Consequently, the evaluation involves analyzing the life cycles of construction materials utilized in the design of post-disaster shelters. In the same vein, Haque (2019) calls for the use of plastic bricks made from recycled waste as a sustainable construction material in Rohingya refugee camps.

While the previous examples primarily center the economic and environmental dimensions of sustainability, Jaradat & Beunders (2021) shift focus to the social dimension. A study of participatory design in refugee camps in Greece emphasizes the significance of officially involving refugees in the decision-making process and architectural management of the camp. The involvement of refugees encompasses all stages of project construction from initial conceptualization to the final completion of project construction. The authors argue that such participation of refugees not only contributes to *social sustainability* but also enhances *economic* and *environmental sustainability* within the camp. That is, in addition to promoting social inclusion for refugees, these policies advocating for a participatory approach aim to optimize refugees' self-sustainability by improving their well-being (social pillar), developing their

technical skills (economic pillar), and fostering resilience to various challenges (economic and environmental pillars). However, despite the intention of involving refugees in the decision-making process, it does not appear to be spontaneous. Rather, it comes across as a premeditated process in which the involvement of refugees is part of a process largely defined by practitioners (PhD student, architects, engineers). That is, the type of project has been chosen by professionals, and the way refugees are involved is based on a framework predetermined by them. While the initial intentions may have been good, the entire process has been primarily shaped through a top-down approach.

Scholars have written about sustainability within refugee camps in a variety of ways, but there has been little to no discussion of the ways in which refugees' survival practices may also be environmentally sustainable. The point is not that all survival practices are sustainable, but to draw attention to those that are. The empirical evidence from this research project suggests that there are a substantial group of such sustainable practices—specifically practices related to dwelling adaptations and home economics —which can be theorized through the notion of *Environmentalism of the Poor*.

5.3. Theoretical Framework: Exploring *Environmentalism of the Poor* and *Assemblage* Theory

Environmentalism of the Poor

The concept of *Environmentalism of the Poor* (EOP) describes how marginalized populations organize themselves to cope with threats to their livelihoods and survival in ways that safeguard the environment. This concept resonates with the experiences of refugees and other underprivileged communities that draw on environmentally (more) sustainable practices in their

efforts to manage marginal conditions in camps and informal settlements. Literature has addressed the concept of the *Environmentalism of the Poor* as a set of related social movements led by impoverished populations in response to threats posed by states, corporations, and other powerful entities to their livelihoods and survival (Guha & Martinez-Alier, 1997; Guha, 2000; Martinez-Alier, 2002; Guha, 2002; Nixon, 2011; Islam & Islam, 2016). Since many marginalized populations depend on the environment for survival, these social movements become environmentalized. In other words, struggles for survival become struggles to protect and/or steward the environments and environmental resources on which marginalized populations depend, including forests, sources of fresh water, edible plants and mushrooms, animals, medicines, and sacred sites (Guha, 1998; Martinez-Alier, 2014). EOP has emerged as a form of resistance and a demand for recognition and environmental democracy, converging with social and environmental justice movements in advocating for equal access to environmental benefits and rights (Martinez-Alier, 2014).

The theory of EOP is based on an understanding of the intricate relationship between the environment and the economy, which has been characterized as deeply conflictual during the 20th century (Moore, 2000). This conflict stems from two primary factors: the exponential growth of the population and the widespread use of non-recyclable and unsustainable materials in industrial processes, posing threats to both the industrial sector and the overall economy (Moore, 2000). Consequently, economists have shown a growing interest in the topics of sustainability and environmentalism (Guha, 2002). Guha (2002) criticizes the claim made by the economist Lester Thurow, who suggests that individuals from the upper-middle class display greater concern for environmentalism than the poor. Guha (2002) counters this argument by

pointing to the notable Chipko movement in India and similar movements that emerged in the 1970s in countries such as Brazil, Kenya, India, Ecuador, and other communities characterized as economically disadvantaged (i.e., peasants and pastoralists).

To provide some contextual background, it is important to understand that EOP is a response to a dominant western understanding of environmentalism as a struggle reserved for the middle and upper classes (Guha, 2002). Specifically, this dominant understanding suggests that in order for individuals to prioritize environmental concerns and engage in sustainable practices, they must first have their basic needs fulfilled—having a "full stomach" (p. 204). Conversely, marginalized populations are imagined as too hungry or too busy meeting their needs to engage in environmentalism (Guha, 2002). Guha (2002) draws on histories of the Chipko movement and other movements of marginalized people throughout the Global South to challenge this reading of environmentalism as an elite project. As an example of EOP, the Chipko movement involved impoverished individuals actively restoring forests which had been cleared and degraded on hillsides by commercial forestry practices in India through planting and careful cultivation techniques (Guha, 2002). Guha (2002) and others also note that the most significant environmental damage often arises from extraction and energy-resource production processes that predominantly favor the interests of the wealthy and their consumer habits. Notably, the affluent have a wide range of alternatives and resources available to them, enabling them to easily shift to anti-environmental options if necessary (Guha, 2002). In contrast, the poor are typically reliant on the immediate environment in which they reside, with limited alternatives at their disposal. Remarkably, the Chipko movement exerted pressure on the Indian parliament to prioritize the needs of the poor over commercial interests through policy changes (Guha, 2002).

Environmentalism of the Poor (EOP) originated as a set of grassroots movements that gradually gained international prominence, spreading across the globe and even reaching the Global North in its efforts to foster support and drive significant worldwide change (Islam & Islam, 2016). EOP has the potential to serve as a foundation for collaboration between the Global North and South, working together towards achieving an environmentally sustainable society (Davey, 2009).

EOP is relevant for theorizing the survival strategies of Palestinians refugees in camps that are the focus of this study. While the refugees and their organizations are not involved in dramatic environmental justice struggles like the Chipko movement, their efforts to survive and thrive under difficult conditions nevertheless have deep environmental implications. Refugees, through their *home-making* survival practices, transform not only homes but neighborhoods and camps while contributing to environmental sustainability in a variety of ways.

In this chapter, I aim to illuminate a variety of ways that refugees' survival *home-making* practices contribute to environmental sustainability. In this study, I understand *home-making* as comprised of all the adaptation practices used by refugees to alter the material and symbolic qualities of physical dwellings (or houses) to transform them into homes, specifically practices related to dwelling adaptations and home economics. A significant contribution to this topic is the work of Brun and Fábos (2015). In their study, they introduce a theoretical framework that revolves around a dynamic understanding of "home" as both a concept and a set of actions. This framework effectively captures the aspirations and daily routines of refugees and provides insights into understanding refugees’ sustainable *home-making* practices of survival (refer to chapter 4 for further details on this framework).

Environmental home-making practices are bottom-up strategies that draw on a wide range of traditions, materials, ideas, policies, technologies and more. For this reason, it is useful to conceptualize them through the *assemblage* theory.

Assemblage theory proposes a view of reality as composed of dynamic and contingent *assemblages*, which are temporary configurations or arrangements of heterogeneous elements, flows and components (Dovey, 2010). These elements or components can be human and non-human, material and immaterial, and come together to form complex and interconnected systems (Dovey, 2010). According to *assemblage* theory, *assemblages* are not predetermined or fixed entities but are constantly in a process of becoming, characterized by their multiplicity, non-hierarchical organization, and the potential for constant transformation and reconfiguration (Dovey, 2010, De la Llata, 2021, Hillier, 2017a, 2017b).

In this study, I employ *assemblage* theory to gain insights into sustainability from a bottom-up perspective as *assemblage* thinking focuses on relationships among a system's components, disrupting the notion of power as absolute or one-sided. Acknowledging the multifaceted nature of sustainability, I consciously adopt the lens of environmental sustainability in order to narrow the focus of analysis and highlight the intricate *assemblage* involved in its development. I aim to elucidate the interconnected flows and networks that influence refugees' survival *home-making* practices, shedding light on the extent to which they promote environmental sustainability.

5.4. Methodology

I employ a methodological approach that represents a combination of *assemblage* theory and *Environmentalism of the Poor*. In this study, I make use of the concept of EOP as an instructive lens through which I examine refugees' survival practices in the camp. It is important to note that refugees, from this perspective, are not inherently poor, but their socio-economic status often stems from the denial of certain rights enjoyed by non-refugee citizens and by the geopolitical and colonial dynamics that produced a Palestinian refugee population in the first place (as exemplified in the case of Jordan).

More particularly, I examine refugees' survival *home-making* practices used to sustain their livelihoods, analyzing environmental sustainability as encompassed by both dwelling adaptations and home economics. Drawing on EOP and *assemblage* theory, this study analyzes these survival *home-making* practices as a set of interdependent relations in these specific cases, acknowledging the inherent political nature of these practices, influenced by various external factors (i.e., institutional policies and regulations, international NGOs, international policies and practices).

The methods utilized in this research are both spatial and experiential in nature. Spatial methods encompass archival research, such as examining photographs from the UNRWA archive. The experiential aspect involves ethnographic fieldwork conducted between November 2021 and April 2022 in three Palestinian camps in Jordan: Al-Husn, Talbiyeh, and Baqa'a. The fieldwork is based on direct observation, interviews with key actors and graphic journaling.

This fieldwork has provided me an opportunity to fully immerse myself in the research context, providing direct and firsthand experience within camps. Furthermore, it has facilitated face-to-

face interactions with key actors, providing a platform for engaging in rich and diverse interviews that reflect the varied perspectives of these individuals (i.e., first, second, and third-generation refugees, as well as UNRWA and DPA staff members). I employed both semi-structured (see Chapter 3 for further details) and in-depth interviews. I employed in-depth interviews with refugees when seeking to gain a comprehensive understanding of how specific practices function as *assemblages*.

To conduct the analysis, I adopt the methodology described by Emerson et al. (2011) in *Writing Ethnographic Fieldnotes.* This approach involves presenting excerpts from field interviews in the form of vignettes, analyzing it based on other observations or in light of the literature (refer to chapter 4 for further details on this method). I also adopted methods of illustrative sketches, photographic analysis, and the creation of AutoCAD drawings. This combination of methods provides a firsthand and personal understanding of the current conditions within the camps.

5.5. Empirical Analysis: Exploring refugees' Survival *Home-making* practices that Promote Environmental Sustainability

5.5.1. Refugees' Environmentally sustainable Practices

This section explores how refugees' survival *home-making* practices have promoted environmental sustainability. By identifying these practices as survival practices, I refer to the capabilities of these *home-making* practices to sustain refugees' livelihoods, including settlement adaptations and home economics practices, while focusing on the environmental benefits of these practices. In the following sections, I identify three main groups of refugees' survival *home-making* practices from the case studies: urban agriculture, alternative energy practices, and

waste management practices. Within each group, I select one example and provide a detailed explanation of how that particular *home-making* practice functions as *assemblage*.

5.5.1.1. Urban Agriculture

Urban Agriculture is commonly defined in the literature as a set of environmental activities, typically involving cultivation or livestock husbandry, that take place in urban areas characterized by limited space and high population density (Adam-Bradford & Veenhuizen, 2015). These practices aim to improve access to food and generate income (Adam-Bradford & Veenhuizen, 2015). In this section, I present examples of refugees' survival home-making practices falling under the category of Urban Agriculture.

The Courtyard, or Housh

In Palestine, it is widely recognized that a *housh* (courtyard) is a crucial element of a home. The *housh* serves as an area where trees, flowers, and other plants are cultivated, livestock is cared for, children can play, and adults can meet and talk. While the presence of *housh* was observed in all three case studies, it was most prominent in Al-Husn camp. Unfortunately, in Baqa'a and Talbiyeh, the existence of *housh* was relatively rare due to issues of overcrowding and high population density in comparison to Al-Husn. E. Shatarat, a first-generation interviewee and refugee from Baqa'a camp, emphasized the significance of having a *housh* for her and her family:

> "In Hebron, in Palestine, where I am originally from, we had a big *housh* in our *home* there in 1948. I still remember how every single house had *Housh*. The minimum *housh* size was around 1.5 donums! People were building a big house on Seven arches [a reference to the cross-vaulting roofing technique followed in the vernacular architecture of Palestine]. We raised livestock in *Baykeh* [a small separate open room where animals are kept with food and water within the *housh*]. This courtyard was enclosed with a thick wall

> surrounding it and the whole house altogether. It, also, was known to have a water well dug in the *housh* to collect rainwater throughout the year. It helps to alleviate the hot summer temperatures and offers shade. In the 70s, in Baqa'a camp, you would find plenty of *Housh* spaces, which are smaller in size than those in Palestine, but, however, did the job. (Personal communication, Baqa'a camp, January 2021)

Shatarat's remarks not only highlight the environmental advantages of the *housh* but also shed light on how it is a significant aspect of Palestinian heritage that refugees aim to preserve. The *housh* presents a number of benefits to environmental sustainability and survival. First, it serves as a space for conserving natural resources, including water, land, animals, air, and the well-being of its inhabitants. Secondly, the *housh* acts as a habitat for insects and vertebrates, which build soil structure and reduce pest populations. While these gardens may also attract some mice and mosquitoes, they contribute to local biodiversity and maintain ecological balance in the surrounding environment. Third, it aids in mitigating the heat island effect by providing shade and is referred to as a "micro-climate modifier," in the context of house courtyards (Ofiedane & Eze, 2019, p. 25). It also facilitates natural airflow, allowing for improved ventilation and cooling within the house. This is especially beneficial in contexts with limited access to mechanical cooling systems such as refugee camps. Finally, in terms of economic survival of refugees, raising livestock and selling their products, such as milk or eggs, can generate income for refugees, enhancing their economic resilience and self-reliance.

While the presence of *housh* was not as prominent in Baqa'a camp, Al-Husn camp presented intriguing examples of its implementation. Kh. Awwad from Al-Husn camp demonstrated innovative and resourceful methods of reconstructing the traditional Palestinian *housh* within his current dwelling in the camp:

> “I have this *housh* that surrounds my whole house from all directions. As you can see it is all planted, mainly olive trees [9-10 olive trees are planted]. This courtyard was once the rest of the empty plot of land given to us by the UNRWA, it was up to us to manage this space. Most refugees have left a space for *housh*, whether it being big in size or small. I was lucky enough to have extra space around the house, which was initially intended to be a passage between the housing units [around 2.7m compared to 2m in neighboring units and 0.7m in Baqa’a and Talbiyeh camps]. In my case this passage was wide enough to be used partially as a continuation to my *housh* space. I, also, make use of this “once was passage” space, where I place a big tank of water that is used to collect rainwater to later be used for planting and cleaning” (Personal communication, Al-Husn camp, November 2021).

Kh. Awwad successfully managed to recreate a sense of homeland within the camp environment. He replaced the water well that was once used in an old Palestinian house with a water tank placed in the courtyard of his dwelling. Choosing to plant olive trees in the *housh* holds deep cultural and environmental significance, symbolizing the resilience and steadfastness of Palestinians, as the roots of the olive tree delve deep into the land in search of water. This choice aligns with both the environmental and socio-cultural aspects of sustainability, emphasizing the role of survival *home-making* in sustaining elements beyond the material dimension. In terms of environmental sustainability and survival in this example, Kh. Awwad has transformed the concept of a water well, associated with cultural *housh,* into a water tank. This tank is specifically designed to collect and retain rainwater, contributing to the conservation of water resources and providing a sustainable water supply for various household needs. Given that Jordan faces significant challenges in terms of its fresh water supply, making it one of the scarcest countries in this regard (Okour et al., 2012), there is a lack of regular access to fresh water supply in the camp. As reported by one of the interviewees in Al-Husn camp, water sometimes reaches the camp only once a month. In light of this situation, the practice of using water tanks in refugee camps serves a dual purpose. It greatly aids refugees in their survival by ensuring a more reliable

and sustainable water source and simultaneously presents significant environmentally sustainable benefits, contributing to the responsible utilization and conservation of precious water resources. Also, the example of planting olive trees highlights a vital survival strategy employed by refugees, where olive trees provide sustenance while preserving cultural heritage by maintaining a connection to their homeland, as demonstrated. Additionally, planting olive trees contributes to environmental sustainability by facilitating carbon sequestration and soil conservation (Colombo & Rocamora-Montiel, 2018). The extensive root system of olive trees (Fresco, 1996) plays a crucial role in preventing soil erosion by stabilizing the soil structure, thereby promoting long-term soil health (see Figure 43-44).

Figure 43. Awwad's internal courtyard (*housh*) featuring his olive trees in Al-Husn camp, Irbid, Jordan (Alqub, 2022).

Figure 44. Awwad's water tank in his courtyard in Al-Husn camp, Irbid, Jordan (Alqub, 2022).

Similarly, in Talbiyeh camp, U. Mohammed, a Bedouin woman, enjoys the advantage of having a relatively larger house and courtyard due to its location at the camp's edge, allowing her to utilize the space more efficiently. U. Mohammed engages in livestock rearing and cultivating edible produce in her home courtyard. She expressed that she rarely felt the need to purchase food from outside her home, given the abundance of resources available within the boundaries of her house:

> "I plant everything that I need here in my backyard, for example, veggies, fruits, whole grains. I use the livestock that I raise to get milk, egg, meat; and I make cheese, butter, bread and thick yogurt. I recycle the waste into nutrient-rich compost, instead of buying it from the store. We are Bedouins [nomads], we are used to making everything on our own; and we can't stand what *fallahi* [peasants] can. Just don't confine us with a small space. That's the reason why we moved out of the camp boundaries and built our home here at the edges, where larger spaces are available. The whole family meets every

> weekend in the morning, and we have a big fresh breakfast in the backyard and from its produce" (personal communication, Talbiyeh camp, December 2021).

This example demonstrates how refugees utilize the *housh* to ensure their survival, self-sufficiency, and effectively contribute to environmental sustainability, illustrating a connection between these three concepts. To highlight this connection, refugees achieved self-sufficiency in terms of food security, as they were able to produce nutritious food without relying on agrochemicals (due to the use of home-made organic compost), thus promoting environmental sustainability. This practice enabled them to maintain a sustainable and affordable supply of food, and, accordingly, support their survival. Moreover, the *housh* not only contributed to environmental sustainability but also enhanced overall quality of life, becoming a crucial aspect of individuals' survival. Access to green spaces has been proven to have a positive influence on psychological well-being (Roe, 2016), providing a pleasant environment for recreation and social interactions and gatherings, as exemplified in the case of U. Mohammed.

It is worth mentioning that U. Mohammed generously gave me some of her plants before I left, with the intention of planting them in my own house. This act of sharing plants is a common practice in Palestinian community, where neighbors and friends exchange fruitful seedlings to benefit and cultivate them in their own gardens. It also exemplifies the values of hospitality and care within the camp community.

The *housh* promotes environmental and economic sustainability, which in turn underscores a strong connection to EOP. That is, the examples presented do not represent individual actions, but rather reflect an organized form of environmentalism, in which *houshes* are places for neighbors and family members to gather and share seedlings or food, facilitating collective

organization and cooperation. The *housh* provides a physical space for exchanging knowledge, experiences, skills, and resources related to sustainable practice. These collective gatherings in the courtyard not only enhance the environmental and economic sustainability of the community but also promote cultural preservation and social cohesion among its members.

Roof Gardens

Another example of *Urban agriculture* in Palestinian refugee camps is roof gardens. In cases where the entire 96 m² plot allocated by UNRWA to each family was fully utilized by refugees to accommodate the growing size of their families or the population, the option of a roof garden emerged as a viable alternative to the *housh*. F. Aleesa's roof garden in Al-Husn camp (Figure 45) stands out as an intriguing example that has garnered attention from international organizations, contributing to its further development. He describes this process as follows:

Figure 45. Aleesa's roof garden in Al-Husn camp, Irbid, Jordan (Alqub, 2022).

> "I was born in 1954 in Tobas/Nablus. I have seen my father cultivating our lands in Palestine. Agriculture is part of our identity; it's running in our veins. Thus, and since the space around my house was not enough for me to practice this hobby, I decided to plant the roof. This took place 10 years ago, a German NGO knew about my initiative and provided me with complementary tools, for example, plastic sheets to make a mini greenhouse, organic fertilizers, and I had already planted the roof from my own pocket- The German NGO promised to adopt my small project, but they didn't follow up. My

> family and I were relying on the plants we grow, for cooking and personal consumption and neighbors sometimes. I planted mint, sage, coriander, tomato, cucumber, zucchini, and fruits, among other edible plants. However, I was facing the issue of scarce water supply in the camp, as Jordan is known for its limited water resources. Sometimes, tap water reaches the camp once, for 3 hrs, every 2-3 months. Otherwise, [with access to water for the garden] my roof garden would do much better and help the local community. As a result, my project has deteriorated, and the German NGO didn't follow up with me as promised. We believe that such NGOs come under the cover of social and self-development initiatives, but their real purpose is purely financial."

This example holds significant potential for replication in Al-Husn camp and other camps in Jordan. Vertical expansion, as the only viable option to accommodate the growing camp population, underscores the importance of rooftop gardens in sustaining the environment, livelihoods, economy, and society of refugees. However, the application of rooftop gardens in Baqa'a and Talbiyeh camps faced challenges due to the prevalence of tiled roofs (implemented to prevent water leakage) and higher poverty levels compared to Al-Husn camp. These factors posed difficulties in implementing similar practices in those camps.

F. Aleesa provides examples that serve as a clear demonstration of how *home-making* practices function as environmentally sustainable *assemblages*. As the first refugee to apply the practice of installing roof gardens in a professional manner, F. Aleesa drew upon knowledge passed down to him by his father in Palestine. His historical legacy played a crucial role in shaping his knowledge and practice. F. Aleesa had the opportunity to travel to Germany during his early adulthood for a period of seven years, which allowed him to earn some money before returning to the camp, prompted by family pressures.

Using the money he collected from Germany, F. Aleesa initiated the roof garden as a small project and acquired the necessary agricultural materials such as plants, seedlings, and seeds. Meanwhile, he became a member of *Al-Karmel* sport club in the camp, where he first

encountered a German NGO. This meeting became the starting point for the German NGO's involvement in F. Aleesa's project, as they recognized its potential and decided to support its expansion. They provided him with additional tools such as organic fertilizers, plastic sheeting, and irrigation technology (see Figure 46).

Figure 46. Aleesa’s roof garden in Al-Husn camp, Irbid, Jordan (Alqub, 2022).

However, the project faced challenges due to water scarcity, both in Jordan as a whole and specifically in the camp, where the lack of suitable infrastructure hindered its growth. Furthermore, the German NGO failed to fulfill their promised follow-up and support for the project, without providing a clear reason for their withdrawal. F. Aleesa expressed resentment towards such NGOs, referring to them as entering the camp under the guise of humanitarian aid while aiming to financially benefit from the refugee crisis through the funds they receive as NGO

institutions. This critique highlights the role of refugees in increasing the sustainability of the camp through their survival practices, in contrast to the top-down environmental sustainability efforts undertaken by NGOs. It underscores that although bottom-up actors (refugees) have fewer resources, they can be more successful in achieving sustainability. This example highlights the empowerment and effectiveness of refugees in contributing to environmental sustainability, even in the face of resource challenges.

The role of politics in this example can be observed in two distinct stages. First, the practice of installing roof gardens was initiated by a refugee who asserted his identity through the act of *home-making*. The initial success of the project was facilitated by the support of the German NGO, which led F. Aleesa's family to anticipate significant personal and economic benefit. However, the second stage involved the sudden cessation of the NGO's assistance and the challenges posed by water scarcity, which acted as constraints on the practice.

The German NGO played a vital role in expanding the project beyond what a single refugee could handle independently. The subsequent withdrawal of their support, combined with the issue of water scarcity, posed significant challenges. It is important to note that the water scarcity issue in Jordan is primarily attributed to geopolitical factors, with allegations made against Israel for

circumventing their water-sharing agreement with Jordan (Yorke, 2013). As a result, Aleesa faced obstacles to achieving his original plans. Nevertheless, he still benefited from the roof garden in terms of personal consumption, sharing with neighbors, and increasing sustainability and autonomy. In Aleesa's own words, "if the NGO had not intervened initially and allowed my garden to grow gradually, and if there had been sufficient water supply, this roof garden would have

provided me with substantial savings, much more that it does now" (Personal interview, Al-Husn, December, 2021).

The interview with F. Aleesa sheds light on the influence of power and politics, including the role of international NGOs and contextual limitations in Jordan. The survival *home-making* practice undertaken by Aleesa has been shaped by a complex interplay of various elements, including political factors, material components, human agency, geographical characteristics, historical context, and knowledge. These factors have interacted in unique ways over time, leading to changes in the networks and relationships among them, resulting in the formation of a specific *assemblage* at a given moment. Figure 47 illustrates the *assemblage* of Aleesa's roof garden, providing an explanation of how this example of survival *home-making* practice operates as an environmentally sustainable *assemblage.*

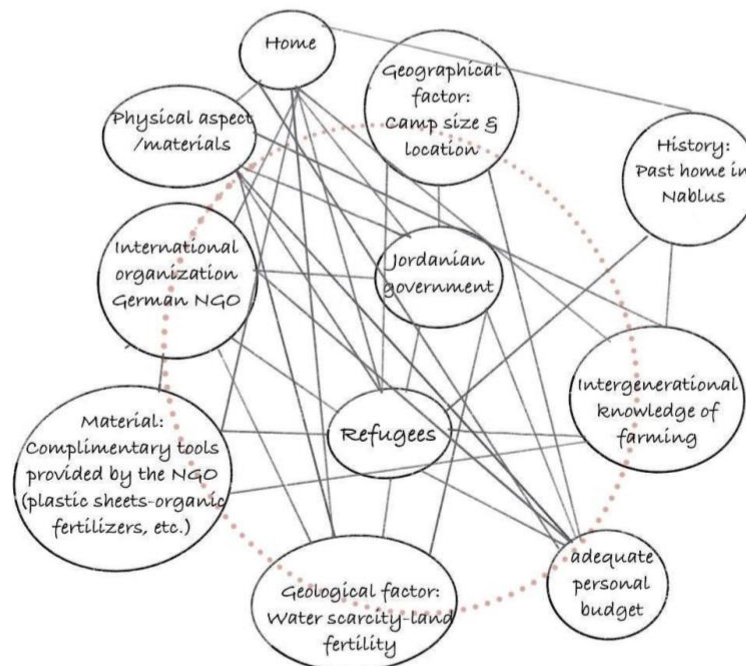


Figure 47. Aleesa's roof garden, as a *home-making* practice, operates as an environmentally sustainable *assemblage*. The red dotted circle exemplifies the material delimitations of the practice of roof gardening. The lens of *assemblage* helps understand how it operates beyond its material boundaries (Alqub, 2022).

The example of roof gardens contributes to environmental sustainability and survival in several ways. First, the irrigation methods followed in this example were drip irrigation and rainwater harvesting. These methods are known to be sustainable due to their ability to efficiently use water sources, minimizing water loss (Evett et al., 2005). Second, roof gardens absorb CO^2 (Barreiro, 2012), improving air quality. Third, roof gardens serve as a survival strategy for community building through gardening activities that can be collective and collaborative, enabling the sharing of knowledge and experiences among the camp community members.

Figure 48 illustrates the diverse ways in which refugees have embraced *home making* practices of survival to achieve sustainability.

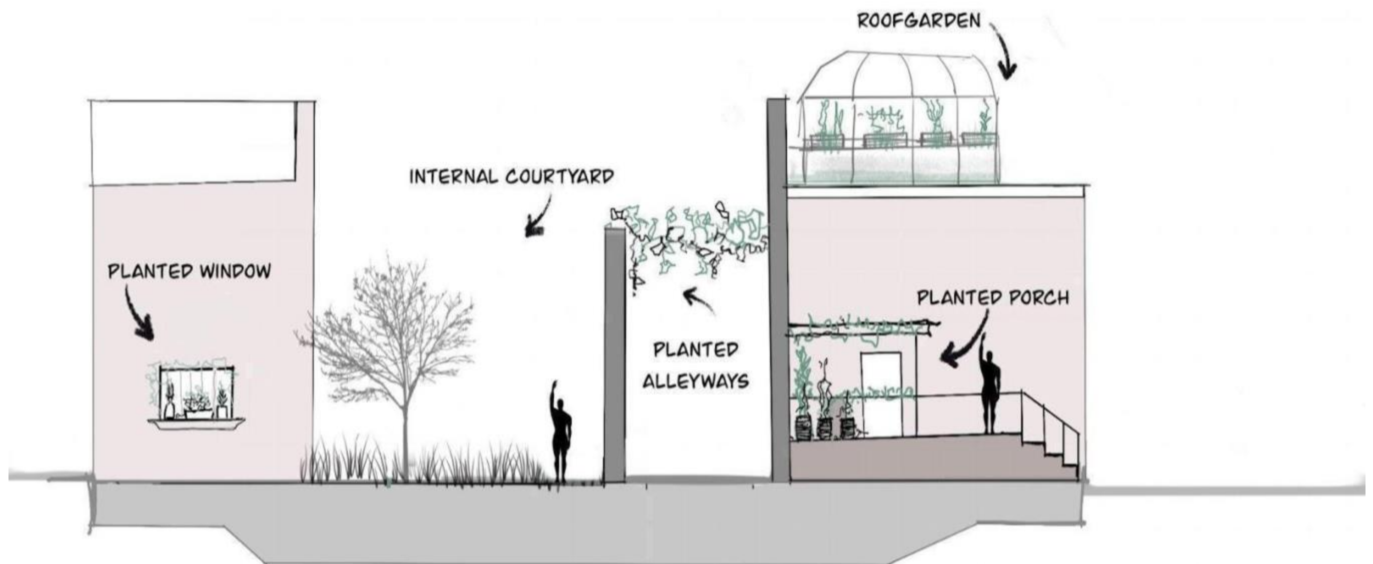


Figure 48. An illustrative sketch that gathers the environmental *home-making* practices of refugees in camps (Alqub, 2022).

5.5.1.2. Alternative Energy Practices

Photovoltaic Systems- Solar Heaters

Another set of sustainable *home-making* practices employed by refugees falls under the category of Alternative Energy. Jordan is recognized as one of the countries situated in the Solar Belt, benefiting from approximately 320 sunny days per year and a high potential for solar energy generation (Alrwashdeh, 2022). Refugees in the case studies have acknowledged and capitalized on this solar energy potential within their built environment. Two main types of solar energy systems are utilized in the camps to meet daily basic needs.

The first and most commonly used system is the solar collector system, also known as solar flat plate collectors (FPCs). This system is cost-effective and primarily used to heat water, replacing the use of traditional fuels that pose environmental hazards and are financially burdensome (Olczak et al., 2020). The second type is the photovoltaic system (PV), which I will further elaborate as an example of a practice adopted by refugees that operates as an *assemblage*.

Although the PV system is known to be more expensive compared to the solar collector system, it is a sustainable method that offers greater efficiency by directly converting solar energy into electricity, reducing reliance on natural gas, which is commonly used to produce electricity in Jordan. The idea of incorporating this system into the camps emerged through efforts to enhance the capacities of Camp Services Committees (comprised of camp residents) and advisory bodies, with the objective of attracting funding from international organizations. The German Society for International Cooperation (GIZ) adopted the committees' proposed alternative energy project and contributed 100,000 JD to implement it. Initially, the project was implemented in selected

camps, including Baqa'a, resulting in electricity bill savings of up to 70% (DPA annual report, 2019).

The success of PV system projects in certain camps has inspired other camps, including Al-Husn, to adopt this practice. In Al-Husn, the initial implementation of PV systems was led by civil society institutions such as mosques, women's centers, schools, and DPA offices within the camp. Refugees became aware of the long-term benefits of PV system projects through successful stories shared by beneficiaries residing both within and outside their own camp. As a result, refugees in Al-Husn began installing PV systems on the rooftops of their homes.

The installation of PV systems by a significant number of refugees was made possible by a facilitation provided to 75% of refugees receiving stipends from the Ministry of Social Development, granting them the right to install PV systems free of charge (E. Sqour, Personal communication, April 2022). This facilitation was in response to the high number of applications submitted by refugees expressing their desire to install PV systems. Additionally, there are examples of refugees with better economic situations who have installed PV systems at their own expense, as recorded during interviews with DPA staff members, enabling them to reap both environmental and economic benefits. It is worth mentioning that the DPA office holds the responsibility of granting official permission for the installation of PV systems for camp residents, as well as facilitating the process of installation.

This example highlights how refugees have adapted their settlements by utilizing the rooftops of their homes to install PV systems. The solar panel system (PV) contributes to the survival of refugees and sustainability in several ways. First, it enables them to achieve long-term economic

savings by reducing reliance on expensive gas-based energy. Second, it is a viable alternative to gas-generated electricity, particularly in light of complaints about the irregularity of the electricity network in certain camps (e.g., Baqa'a camp), thereby fostering self-sufficiency. Third, solar panel systems present environmentally sustainable benefits, such as reducing carbon footprints and helping combat global warming (Akhtar et al., 2021). While the use of solar panel systems is less common in Jordan compared to solar collector heaters due to their higher cost, the facilitation provided by the government and other institutions has made them a viable option for adoption in Palestinian camps in Jordan.

As the installation of PV systems requires official permission from the DPA, power relations play a role in this process. Complaints have been raised by some refugees claiming that the selection of beneficiaries is influenced by connections to individuals with official access and power. These allegations are supported by the fact that the beneficiaries of this service are often found to be living in the same block within the camp (online communication, Al-Husn, January 20th, 2023). While the accuracy of these claims remains uncertain, the process of waiting for official permission from an institution can act as a constraint on the practice of installing PV systems. Figure 49 depicts the *assemblage* of the sustainable practice of PV cells.

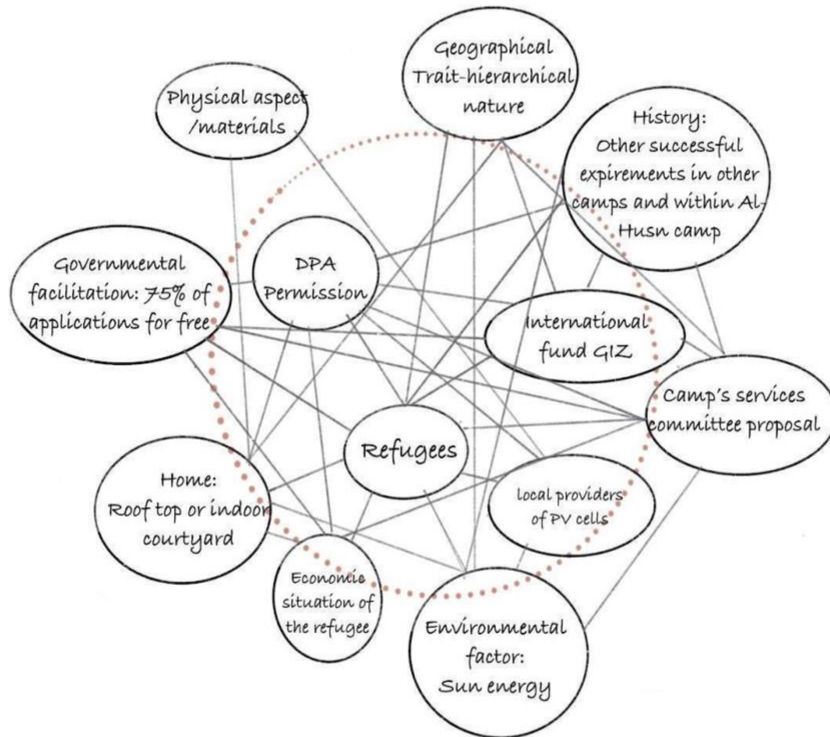


Figure 49. PV solar systems serve as a prime example of a *home-making* practice operating as an environmentally sustainable *assemblage*. This illustration highlights how the PV *assemblage* functions and extends beyond its material boundaries. The red dotted circle represents the material delimitations associated with the practice of installing a PV system in the camp. However, when viewed through the lens of *assemblage*, it becomes evident that its impact and significance transcend these physical boundaries (Alqub, 2022).

The *assemblage* perspective presents the interconnected relationships and dynamics at play. The PV system *assemblage* involves various components and flows such as power relations, official permissions, facilitation by institutions, economic constraints, and even potential issues of corruption or favoritism in beneficiary selection. These factors and flows shape and influence the practice of installing PV systems in the camp.

To the left and in the middle, various examples of (housh) in Al-Husn camp. To the right, a planted alleyway in Talbiyeh camp.

To the left, a housh in Talbiyeh camp for a Bedouin family. In the middle, a landscaped porch leading to the main entrance of a home in Al-Husn camp. To the right, the use of a PV system on the rooftop of the DPA office in Al-Husn camp.

Figure 50. A set of photos showing examples of refugees' environmentally sustainable practices, Irbid, Jordan (Alqub, 2022).

It is worth to mention that while this research focuses on *home-making* practices of the individuals or refugees in the camp, the implementation of the solar panels in this context seems to be the result, in part, of a combination of top-down processes (i.e., initiatives taken by institutions and government) and bottom-up processes (i.e., individual choices, community initiatives).

The sustainable *home-making* practice of utilizing solar panels establishes a strong connection with the concept of EOP. It transcends individual actions and emerges as a collective and organized form of environmentalism. This example highlights instances where the adoption and installation of solar panels was driven by the sharing of knowledge and experiences regarding successful outcomes. This collective approach resonated across the camps, leading refugees to encourage and support each other in their pursuit of obtaining solar panels.

5.5.1.3. Waste Management Practices

Private Washrooms

Before connecting camps to the main sewage system, refugees relied on the public washrooms provided by UNRWA (UNRWA archive, 1970). However, this service proved to be inefficient, particularly due to the rapid growth of the camp population. It became impractical for refugees, especially those with children or during inclement weather, to access the nearest washroom. Consequently, refugees resorted to a self-reliant and sustainable solution: building private washrooms within their homes. What makes these private washrooms environmentally sustainable is that their presence prevents severe environmental consequences and public health problems. For instance, the limited public toilets installed by UNRWA had the risk of developing disease outbreaks, as the leakage of wastewater through open lines of drainage could result in contaminating surface water and other negative environmental and public health impacts. Private washrooms also serve as a survival strategy, as they save lives by providing essential support for individuals, especially when children or elderly people are very sick and need to be

near a washroom, protected from the sun, and hydrated. Private washrooms are also more accessible for people with disabilities than the shared units installed by UNRWA.

In this example, I demonstrate how this practice of creating private washrooms serves as an environmentally sustainable *assemblage*, shaped by the interactions between both human and non-human components and flows.

The majority of Palestinian refugee camps in Jordan lack sufficient sewage and sanitation systems, particularly those situated in isolated areas away from urban centers, such as Talbiyeh camp (Q. Abu, personal communication, Talbiyeh camp, December 2021). According to Q. Abu from Talbiyeh camp, the process of waiting in line to use public washrooms in the desert-like surroundings became unbearable for refugees, especially those with children. Consequently, refugees took matters into their own hands and constructed their own toilets.

Refugees designated a separate outdoor section of their 96 m^2 plots to build toilets. As described by Q. Abu, the process involves first digging a large hole in the ground within the homes of refugees. Refugees then repurpose construction materials, such as zinc sheets provided by UNRWA for shelter construction, to reinforce and seal the holes from inside. In some cases, the government previously constructed underground shelters made of concrete to protect refugees from Israeli attacks during the *Fidayeen* period (see Endnote 16). After the war ended, these underground spaces were repurposed by refugees as cesspits, with covered openings to collect sewage and wastewater. However, the responsibility for waste water and sewage collection management lies with refugees themselves, who often contact suction trucks to facilitate the transfer of sewage to the nearest wastewater treatment plant. However, in 2008, an Italian NGO

donated sewage lines to connect the camp to the main, state-operated infrastructure, effectively resolving this issue.

Private washrooms represent an *assemblage* comprising various interconnected factors, both human and non-human, that shape its existence. Human factors include the population increase within the camp, while non-human factors encompass weather conditions, geological composition, UNRWA construction materials, cultural considerations, sewage, etc. This practice highlights the physical modifications made by refugees to their homes in order to endure challenging camp conditions. Homemade washrooms helped alleviate daily environmental hardships faced by refugees, as well as health risks associated with limited shared access to washrooms. With the camp population steadily growing in the mid 70s, the strain on public washrooms becomes more pronounced across the camps.

Refugees assert their autonomy by creating private washrooms as depending solely on UNRWA-provided public washrooms would not have been sustainable in terms of environmental survival within the camp. UNRWA's shared facilities posed health and environmental hazards due to the overwhelming demand and the absence of a sufficient sewage system. Moreover, this practice is environmentally sustainable, as refugees recycle construction material provided by UNRWA (i.e., zinc sheets), minimizing waste. By adapting their homes to meet their basic needs, refugees were able to navigate the challenging circumstances of the camp more effectively.

While EOP emphasizes the environmental practices of the poor, in this case of refugees, it is also important to recognize that some survival strategies were less sustainable than others. In this case, the presence of unused cesspits beneath the housing structures in Talbiyeh camp has

affected the structural stability of homes. These incidents occurred specifically in Talbiyeh, as its geological composition differs from other camps, as it is sandy rather than muddy. Home cesspits also pose some public health risks, as sewer overflow can attract insects and rats. Despite these challenges, the presence of private washroom and the use of single-family cesspits prevents more severe environmental and health issues, as discussed throughout this section. These examples illustrate how some of the survival practices had ambivalent environmental effects.

A crucial aspect of this *assemblage* is the significant influence of politics. Politics plays a pivotal role in shaping the dynamics of this practice, primarily through the agency of the refugees themselves. By undertaking the task of remaking their homes and constructing private washrooms, refugees assert their identity, culture, and resilience in the midst of difficult circumstances. Their actions represent a form of resistance against passivity and helplessness.

The political dimension extends beyond the immediate context of the camp. It can be traced to when refugees were denied their basic rights and legitimate access to adequate hygiene facilities. However, in certain cases, politics played a role in enabling the practice of building private washrooms. For instance, refugees were allowed to repurpose underground government constructions as cesspits, as observed in Talbiyeh camp. Likewise, the utilization of leftover construction materials provided by UNRWA highlights another political factor, as the availability of these resources is influenced by political decisions and arrangements. Therefore, decision-making, resource availability, and permissions all represent political factors that collectively contributed to enabling the establishment of this practice as *assemblage*.

Figure 51 demonstrates how private washrooms function as *assemblage*, illustrating the intricate interplay between the various flows and factors involved.

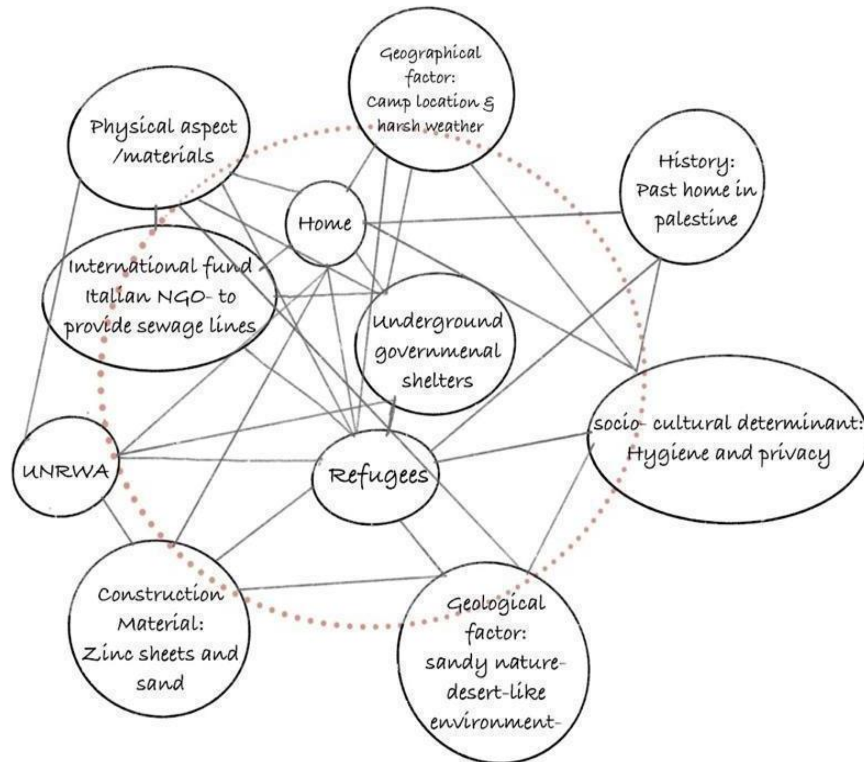


Figure 51. The *assemblage* of a private washroom within the camp exemplifies the *home-making* practice in action. Considering this example as an *assemblage* allows for a deeper understanding of its functioning beyond material boundaries. To illustrate this, a red dotted circle represents the material delimitations of the practice of building private washrooms in the camp (Alqub, 2022).

The *assemblage* of private washroom installation is shaped by social, cultural, and political factors. These factors can include the agency of the refugees, their identity and culture, and the political dynamics that allow for the creation of private washrooms. The lens of *assemblage reveals* the interconnectedness and interdependence of these flows and factors. It demonstrates that the private washroom practice is not just a standalone construction, but rather a complex network of relations and interactions through which refugees build their own autonomy under difficult conditions and create more environmentally sustainable conditions in the camps. This

perspective enables a holistic understanding of the significance of this practice and its impact within the broader context of the camp.

Recycling Practices

Waste management practices carried out by refugees encompass two notable sustainable approaches: the utilization of eco-friendly materials and recycling practices. These practices demonstrate both environmental and economic benefits, as exemplified by the case studies.

In Talbiyeh camp, there are instances of material recycling practices within the confines of the home. U. Jadallah, along with other women, engages in recycling old *thobs* (traditional Palestinian dresses). They carefully cut out intricately embroidered sections, which are typically the most time-consuming and labor-intensive parts of the dress. These embroidered pieces are then incorporated into modern clothing items worn by younger generations. This practice is replicated across all three refugee camps, with other women using embroidered sections to create cushions, accessories, and various home decorations.

Similarly, F. Abu alrub demonstrates her creativity by recycling old wool clothes and transforming them into warm blankets and rugs for winter. Figure 52 showcases her ingenuity in repurposing fabric, plastic bags, and wool, resulting in elegant and personalized furniture pieces. These examples highlight the resourcefulness and innovative spirit of refugees in making the most of available materials, while reducing waste and contributing to environmental sustainability.

Figure 52. Examples of recycling *home-making* practices from Al-Husn camp, Irbid, Jordan (Alqub, 2022).

Similarly, recycling construction materials to remake homes is a common practice within the camp. An example of this can be seen with the zinc material initially provided by UNRWA for roofing purposes. Camp dwellers recycle and repurpose this material by using it as fencing or to cover their courtyards. This sustainable approach allows them to make the most of available resources and reduce waste.

Addressing issues of rainwater leakage into indoor areas was a significant concern documented in interviews. In response, refugees ingeniously recycle materials from the surrounding environment to mitigate this problem. Foil sheets, UNRWA bags (originally used for distributing rations to refugees), leftover bricks, and rocks were repurposed to create effective solutions. Foil

sheets and UNRWA bags were used to cover areas where leakage occurred, offering a practical and resourceful approach to managing this issue.

Refugees also showcase their creativity in promoting environmental sustainability and ensuring survival (both economic and well-being) through a number of sustainable *home-making* practices. For instance, refugees repurpose wallpaper as window curtains, serving as a more affordable alternative to conventional curtains and contributing to their economic survival. Additionally, mattresses are creatively used to cover openings in walls, as demonstrated in Figure 53. Refugees also plant vegetation in unconventional containers such as empty soda cans, buckets, and even non-traditional spaces like unusable car wheels, broken chairs or refrigerators. This innovative approach to gardening was common in almost every house I visited in the camp, promoting environmental sustainability through refugees' *home-making* practices of survival by making the most of their limited resources.

A connection can be made between the gardening practices discussed in the urban agriculture section and these recycling practices. Refugees recycle materials to create planting spaces, showcasing an intriguing interplay between the two practices. This finding highlights how environmentally sustainable practices of survival mutually reinforce one another.

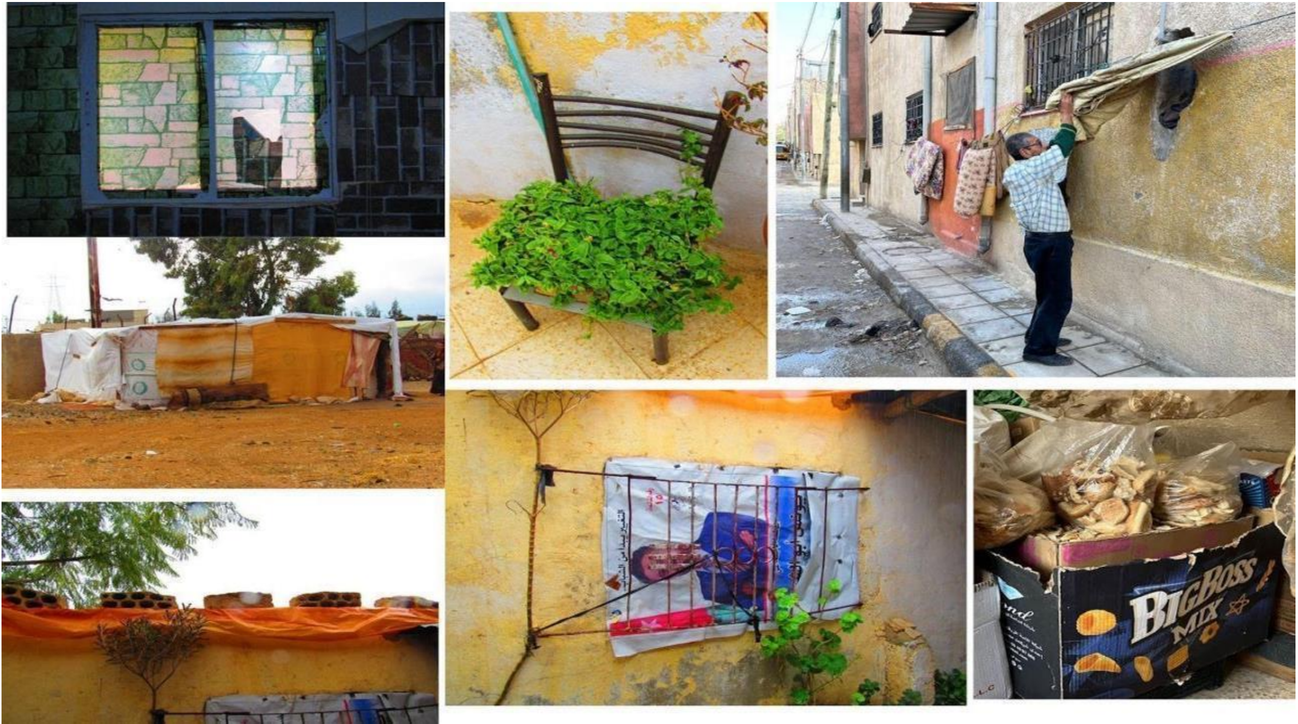


Figure 53. Examples of refugees' sustainable *home-making* practices of survival through the use of recycling material in the re-making of the home space, Amman, Jordan (Alqub, 2022).

Similarly, the example of U. Zaid, from Talbiyeh camp, who has relied on second-hand furniture to furnish her home belongs to the same category. The process she went through to obtain her home's furniture pieces involved various networks and relationships. U. Zaid worked as a housekeeper in local houses outside the camp, a job she obtained through a doctor she had previously worked for at a clinic. This doctor was aware of U. Zaid's difficult situation and connected her with individuals in need of household assistance. During her work as a housekeeper, U. Zaid received donations of old furniture. This process of *home-making* that U. Zaid considered exemplifies how *assemblage* operates. That is, each piece of furniture, that U. Zaid managed to get, serves as a tangible manifestation of the interconnected relationships and networks that contributed to sustaining her physical dwelling. It is evident how this example

promotes environmental sustainability by reducing the demand for new materials and providing key resources that refugees need to survive.

In the 1970s and 1980s, burning wood was a common practice, among refugees, for heating homes in the camps (J. Araisheh, Personal communication, Baqa'a camp, January 2022). The use of wood demonstrates refugees' tendency to make use of all available materials, including many that are renewable and sustainable. Firewood is also affordable, helping refugees to survive economically. J. Araisheh discusses the creative and sustainable techniques employed by refugees during the 1970s and 1980s for lighting, heating, and cooling purposes. They utilized whatever materials were available (i.e., used tin containers, cooking oil, rope, as illustrated in figure 54 and the excerpt below), employing resourceful and environmentally friendly methods. Once again, this demonstrates the overlap among environmentally sustainable survival practices, particularly the connection between alternative energy sources (i.e., firewood) and waste management practices (i.e., reusing tin containers), serving as a clear illustration of how each practice, mutually, supports and reinforces the other.

> "There was the *babour* [portable cooking burner] distributed by the UNRWA. It was super small, so in order to use it as a source of heating for the family, we used to turn it on, put on top of it a used and empty ghee-tin container half filled with water. Then we would put on the lid and make small holes on the upper part of the tin. Now the heat would be conducted and magnified by the tin material [as tin rapidly conducts heat]. The color of tin material turns red due to its high temperature. The water vapor produced inside makes the heating process more efficient and safer. In terms of lighting, we were making homemade lighting tools *fateeleh* or *seraj [*lantern], through the use of glass cover, robe and oil or any other ghee-based material". (J. Araisheh, personal communication, Baqa'a camp, January 2022).

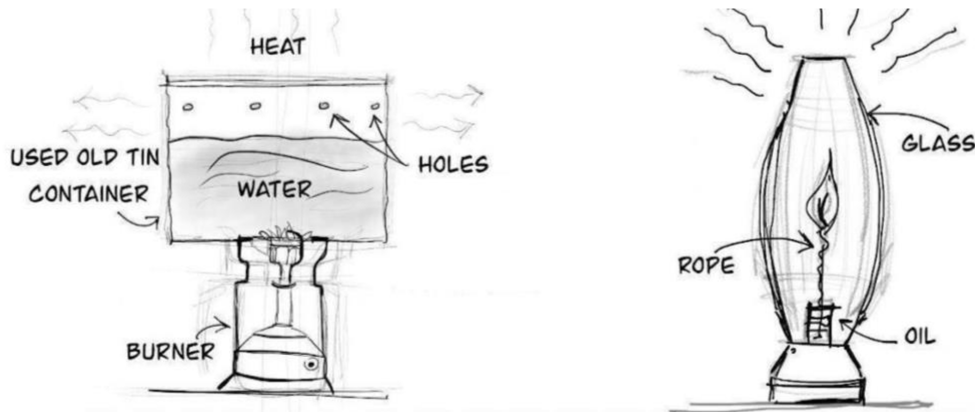


Figure 54. A sketch of the handmade heating tool developed by refugees in the 1970s (left). A sketch of a handmade *fateeleh* (right) (Alqub, 2022).

J. Araisheh then requested his son show me the *fateeleh*, a traditional Palestinian lamp that they keep in their house as a cherished part of their cultural heritage within the camp. The son shared a heartwarming anecdote about his father, who would remind him and his brothers every year during school exams how they used the *Fateeleh* to study at night when there was no electricity available. This reminder aimed to make the son appreciate the privileges he enjoys compared to his father's experiences and resulted in laughter shared among the family members. This intergenerational conversation was incredibly captivating as it demonstrated the passing down of heritage through simple yet meaningful dialogues and material objects among family members.

Refugees exhibit remarkable innovation by utilizing eco-friendly recycled materials from their surrounding environment. Their creativity in creating new objects out of necessity not only addresses their immediate needs but also contributes to the overall environmental sustainability of the camp.

Some construction techniques in the camps draw inspiration from the vernacular architecture of Palestine. For example, in Baqa'a camp, the issue of rainwater leakage in certain houses was addressed using the *areesh* (palm cane) technique for the ceiling. A. JadAllah described this technique as being utilized in her home back in Ramallah, Palestine. In such homes, the structure was built with stone, while the ceiling was constructed with wood strips and *areesh* woven together. It was then covered with a mixture of mud and hay to seal any potential holes in the ceiling. Although this method was used previously, I did not witness present instances across the three camps.

Another notable example is the use of traditional pottery clay for making water pots used in homes. This material is known for its ability to keep water cool for an extended period during summertime, which, in turn, reduces the need for energy-consuming refrigeration methods. It continues to be used in some houses across the three camps for two purposes: First, to preserve tradition and culture; and secondly to care for the environment. Additionally, ceramic tiles are commonly used to address issues of wall mold and dampness (see Figure 55). As ceramic material does not absorb moisture (Oreszczyn, 2000), it effectively reduces the growth of mold (Ho, 2004). The long-term cost-effectiveness of this practice makes it common in the camp setting. According to refugees' extensive experiences with ceramic tiling, it is evident that the durability of ceramic tiling reduces the frequent need for maintenance and repairs, making it a sustainable and cost-effective solution for addressing wall dampness compared to other wall treatments, such as external wall insulation (Byrne et al., 2016). Figure 56 presents a visual representation of these practices.

Figure 55. An example shows the effect of dampness on walls in Al-Husn camp, Irbid, Jordan (Alqub, 2022).

To the left and to the right, the use of zinc sheets provided once by the UNRWA as a roofing technique in different new ways: protection from rainwater at the home's entrance and as fencing material. In the middle, recycling wood to make handmade ladder

Recycling wood into beautiful benches for the Housh

The use of pottery material in water traditional pot to keep water cold

The use of cermaic tiles to treat wall mold and dampness

Figure 56. A variety of eco-friendly materials used across the case studies, Irbid & Amman, Jordan (Alqub, 2022).

In conclusion, while refugees were securing their livelihood, through their survival *home-making* practices, they were also benefiting the environment and achieving self-sufficiency. For example,

the use of solar panels (PV system) fulfilled the refugees' energy needs as well as reduced their reliance on non-renewable energy sources, minimizing their carbon footprint.

Figure 57 presents refugees' *home-making* practices that have significantly contributed to sustaining their livelihoods, demonstrating the creativity and adaptability of the refugees in making use of the limited available resources and finding innovative solutions.

Running small businesses in part of the house: Minimarket, Hair salon, Daycare, etc.

Recycling old embroidered dresses into modernized versions of products for sale: Bags, trays, pockets, scarves.

Making use of rooftops: to the left, a huge handmade place for pigeon raising and selling. The photo in the middle shows a planted rooftop, where a refugee can sell herbs and fresh produce. To the right, another spot in the open air market of Baqa'a camp, where produce and pigeons can be sold.

Figure 57. Refugees' sustainable *home-making* practices that are of economic and environmental benefit, Irbid & Amman, Jordan (Alqub, 2022).

5.6. Discussion

In the unique context of marginalized spaces, particularly refugee camps, the topic of sustainability has traditionally been approached from a hierarchical perspective. Prevailing

discussions have primarily centered around the involvement of professionals in designing "sustainable shelters" (Alshawawreh et al., 2020, p. 2) as a response to the need for improved living conditions in these camps. However, there has been a lack of literature recognizing the active role that refugees themselves play in promoting environmental sustainability through their survival practices.

For this reason, this chapter acknowledges refugees' *home-making* practices, which they employ to sustain and secure their livelihoods (including dwelling adaptations and home economics), as environmentally sustainable processes. To examine these practices, *Environmentalism of the Poor* proves valuable. While refugees are not necessarily synonymous with poverty, both refugees and impoverished communities face limitations in accessing certain social and economic rights enjoyed by other citizens. Exploring *Environmentalism of the Poor* allows for an understanding of the innovative and sustainable practices undertaken by refugees out of necessity.

Nixon (2011) argues that environmental degradation is interconnected with the erosion of civil rights—an argument that guides my focus on the environmental impact of these practices within refugee camps. Similarly, environmental growth can symbolize the advancement of civil rights. Highlighting the environmental effects of these practices challenges the notion that the poor, including refugees, are "too poor to be green" (Guha, 2002, p. 204). Although scholars have debated whether the poor genuinely care about the environment or if these activities are merely a matter of survival (Davey, 2009), results from this study suggest that both perspectives are valid. Some refugees strive to sustain their livelihoods while simultaneously benefiting the environment, while others express genuine environmental motivation for practices such as urban

agriculture and roof gardens. For example, F. Aleesa's roof garden practice represents a reflection of his identity and is a hobby rather than a primary source of food. On the other hand, the example of recycling materials and utilizing all available resources, as illustrated in J. Araisheh's case, showcases a survival practice aimed at sustaining their livelihood while also achieving environmentally sustainable benefits.

The analysis in this study employs a bottom-up perspective on sustainable practices that also acknowledges these practices are influenced by various factors, including material, political, socio-cultural, and geographical. These factors intersect and assemble in ways that can either restrict or facilitate certain types of practices. Thus, I present an unconventional perspective on sustainability, highlighting that practices aimed at survival refugees' livelihood can possess a deeply political nature.

This observation highlights the importance of recognizing the inherently political nature of sustainability, a perspective that was overlooked by the UN in the 1987 Brundtland commission (Leknes-Kilmork & Gillebo, 2018). Whether through governmental or UN regulations, corporate power and influence, or the politics involved in residents asserting their identity through (re)creating their homes, it is essential to acknowledge this political dimension.

Given the focus of this study on survival *home-making* practices as *assemblages*, the assertion that "all *assemblages* are political" (Nail, 2017, p. 21) is of particular importance. Acknowledging politics as an intrinsic element of the *assemblage* approach enriches our understanding of refugees' survival/sustainable practices as dynamic responses to various possibilities and constraints. This perspective highlights the inherently political nature of these practices and underscores their significance within broader socio-political contexts.

The empirical section of this study provides illustrative examples, such as urban agriculture, alternative energy practices, and waste management practices, which demonstrate how politics can either support or impede the progress of these practices (e.g., the role of international humanitarian NGOs and the potential impact of corruption in the selection of beneficiaries for PV systems).

The influence of various factors involved in the refugees' *home-making assemblages*, including political and power relations, is complex and interwoven. It is challenging to discern the starting and ending points of their effects. The outcome and impact of these components vary distinctly across different *assemblages.*

In her article *Translocal Assemblages*, McFarlane (2009) suggests that the *assemblage* perspective can be understood through the lens of the construction of the poor, their continuous evolution, and their development through shared knowledge, networks, and connections, which he refers to as *traveling urbanism.* This perspective aligns with the transmission of socio-cultural knowledge and historical legacies across generations (time) and different locations/homes (space), as my study illustrates in the case studies. Some of the survival practices employed by refugees serve to preserve preferred ways of living, specific values (such as hygiene and privacy), relationships, and knowledge (such as farming practices). It is within this context that the potential of *assemblage* thrives, as aptly stated by McFarlane (2009):

> "Assemblage potentially offers a different emphasis. In particular, … assemblage does more than emphasize a set of connections between sites in that it draws attention to history, labor, materiality, and performance. Assemblage points to reassembling and disassembling, to dispersion and transformation." (p. 566)

From McFarlane's words and observations from this study, it is evident that the role of material and non-material circulation, exchange, and transformation is equally crucial in the context of

sustainability as it is in the *assemblage* framework. These processes include practices such as recycling materials, the transmission of social norms and values through physical manifestations, as well as the sharing of traditional skills and knowledge. Analyzing refugees' survival practices emphasizes their agency as a form of power exerted through their *home-making* practices in the camp. The concept of power in this context aligns with McFarlane's (2009) notion of distributed power or de-centered agency, which suggests that power does not necessarily have a fixed, unified image. According to McFarlane, power can coexist and shift over time. This perspective is reflected in the unconventional and powerful role attributed to refugees in this chapter, as they exhibit agency through their survival *home-making* practices, demonstrating that power is not consolidated solely in the hands of higher authorities and professionals.

The empirical findings illustrate the agency of refugees achieved through their survival practices. However, they also address the role of power relations, socio-cultural factors, physical geography, and economic situations in defining the extent and level of this agency. For instance, processes of decision-making and distribution of resources, as examples of power dynamics, shape the parameters of the agency of refugees. Acknowledging these dynamics is essential to comprehend how refugees' survival practices can serve as a means through which the living conditions of the camps can be enhanced.

This study opens up opportunities for collaboration through which refugees become co-planners of their own living spaces. The professionals tasked with managing camp resources can derive significant advantages by amplifying the voices that are, often, overlooked while also exploring opportunities to incorporate refugees' innovative experiences into future policy. In doing so, they

can optimize the utilization of limited resources within these spaces and, simultaneously, promote environmental sustainability. This is not to celebrate the existence or reproduction of refugee camps, but rather acknowledge the current reality. Establishing networks and fostering relationships between institutions and refugees is essential to achieve better living conditions in refugee camps, reducing the struggles they face and attaining environmental sustainability.

5.7. Conclusion

This study aims to broaden the scope of research on sustainability by shifting the focus from institutional change to recognizing the role of refugees in this process. Specifically, the goal is to explore the extent to which refugees' survival *home-making* practices contribute to environmental sustainability. While acknowledging the multidimensional nature of sustainability, this analysis focuses on environmental sustainability for the purpose of focusing the analysis. In order to examine the environmental sustainability benefits derived from refugees' survival *home-making* practices, I use a theoretical framework combining the *Environmentalism of the Poor* (Nixon & Guha) and the *assemblage* theory (Deleuze & Guattari, 1987). This framework facilitates an examination of these practices by elucidating the *assemblages* involved in their development. *Assemblage* theory serves as the lens through which these practices are analyzed, enabling exploration of the interplay between human and non-human elements and the historical influences shaping these practices.

Although this study emphasizes the role of refugee practices, political dynamics are key determinants of the parameters of refugees' survival practices. This observation underscores the potential for future studies to explore the opportunities and challenges encountered by refugees

in their pursuit of sustaining their physical and economic well-being. It signifies the need to delve into the intricate relationship between these practices and politics, offering avenues for further research in understanding the dynamics involved in refugees' efforts to sustain their livelihoods.

Chapter 6 | Research Discussion, Findings, and Conclusion

6.1. Introduction

We live in a precarious time characterized by uncertainty, instability, and vulnerability. Mass migration and forced displacement is taking place across the globe, driven by both circumstantial and structural forces ranging from war and environmental hazards to capitalism, neoliberalism, and neo-imperialism. Although we live in a borderless *Empire* where flows of money and material are facilitated more easily than ever (Hardt & Negri, 2001), for certain populations, human flow is more restricted. A refugee camp is one example of these restrictions. In this study, however, I neither present the camp as successfully achieving this goal (restriction of human flow), nor failing to do so. It is instead placed in a liminal, ambiguous position, where multiple states and interpretations of refugee camps are recognized. However, the multiplicity that refugee camps show on the ground is not well recognized in the realm of theory and practice. Existing studies adopt a limited perspective in understanding the refugee camp, its construction and evolution processes, as illustrated by concepts including Agamben's *state of exception* (1998), Isin & Rygiel's *abject spaces* (2007), and Agier's *contemporary figures of heterotopias* (2012). While these approaches have provided valuable insights into understanding power structures within these spaces, and the resulting subordination of refugees within power hierarchies, they have been less useful in comprehending the dynamic evolution of the spatial order within the camp space and the active agency of refugees within it. Such approaches to refugee camps present a limited view of the multiplicity of actors and agencies involved in the process of camp development and governance. More specifically, in these approaches, the agency of refugees is presented as marginal, highly constricted and underestimated. In an attempt to look beyond these perspectives on refugee camps, I organize the discussion around two key points. First, I

emphasize the role of refugees as equally important to that of authority structures in shaping the camp space through *home-making* practices. Second, I aim to gain a deeper understanding of the refugee camp as a dynamic and fluid space. To achieve this, I employ *assemblage* theory (Deleuze & Guattari, 1987; De Landa, 2006; McFarlane, 2009; Dovey, 2010), as the framework for this study. *Assemblage* theory, being a bottom-up approach (De Landa, 2006; Acuto & Curtis, 2014) and a lens of analysis that considers a given entity as a constellation of material and non-material factors that relate and interact, allows me to capture the inherent fluidity of a refugee camp. It highlights the diverse components that contribute to its ever-evolving nature and shape its current landscape. These dynamic components detach and engage with different *assemblages* over time, continuously redefining the distinct characteristics of the camp as time progresses. Furthermore, by employing the *assemblage* approach in the context of the camp, I aim to underscore the active role of refugees in shaping the development of camps, thus emphasizing their agency through an examination of their *home-making* practices. The discussion chapter seeks to effectively answer the research questions, which are:

1. What kinds of *home-making* practices do refugees engage in within the refugee camp setting?
2. What is the level of agency the refugees have to shape, conceive and imagine their own living spaces and the factors that influence this agency?
3. How are camps spatially and temporally constructed and how is this process shaped by exchanges, interactions and flows within and beyond their boundaries?

In order to answer these questions, the discussion starts by bringing influential work associated with literature of refugee camps, the displaced, *assemblage* theory, and *home-making* into conversation with the research findings. Although this literature provides helpful tools for analyzing, the discussion also highlights nuanced instances where research findings did not fit frameworks common in the relevant literature. For instance, the reviewed literature on marginalized spaces provides an incomplete understanding of the refugee camp, which in addition to marginalizing or providing a restrictive view of the role of refugees in camp development, misses the multiplicity that refugee camps exhibit. This finding, in turn, calls for a more nuanced and holistic framework to analyze such a complex territory while emphasizing the role of refugees in shaping the space they inhabit.

The second part of this chapter addresses this need by introducing key research findings and their contribution to the existing literature. Specifically, my analysis builds on studies that have sought to reclaim the agency of refugees, such as the work of Ramadan (2013), which addresses Palestinian refugee camps in a Lebanese context. However, my analysis departs from that of Ramadan (2013) and other studies that critique limited perspectives of camps in three ways, which constitute the first main contribution of this study.

First, I examine the Jordanian context, where, as Oesch (2017) notes, Palestinian refugees have distinct insider-outsider status within the broader body politic, particularly as many hold citizenship status. Second, I examine different manifestations of *home-making*: the camp, housing settlements, and sustainable livelihood practices of refugees. Finally, I offer a comparative lens that highlights the different forms that camp *assemblages* within the same national and geopolitical setting can assume, providing rich insights into how the agency of

refugees is shaped distinctively across the three cases. Also in this section, I compare camp and home *assemblages*, identifying their constituent components and flows and highlighting their differences. Afterwards, I present the second main contribution of this research project, which moves beyond approaches that overlook the temporal and spatial transformative nature of the camp and may inadvertently lead to the perception of these spaces as static or bounded. This study reconceptualizes the refugee camp as fluid and dynamic, defined by flows and exchanges. Within this section, I emphasize the lack of studies that address the spatial aspect of *assemblage* theory, particularly within the context of refugee camps. This work aims to address this gap in the literature, centering the spatiality of the camp and contributing to the field of *assemblage* theory.

6.2. Discussion: Rethinking the Refugee Camp as a Cluster of Flows and Exchanges

In this study, I seek to build upon existing approaches in understanding refugee camps. First, I aim to interrogate perspectives that often focus on how powerful entities function within these spaces, consequently under-representing the active role of refugees. Second, I strive to transcend the perception of refugee camps as static, bounded and ultimately powerless spaces. Agamben's *state of exceptio*n (1998) presents an example of an approach to camp spaces that concentrates on power dynamics within the camp, particularly emphasizing how coercive sovereign power can subject marginalized individuals within these spaces. However, the findings of this study demonstrate the possibility for refugees to transcend this dominant system through dynamics such as creative agency and political connections. In the context of this research, power does not adhere to the Agamben's (1998) notion of a centralized, singular force embodied in sovereign

power. For example, the Jordanian state does not represent a totalized repressive sovereignty over Palestinian refugee camps. What makes this sovereignty unique is that, contrary to Agamben's (1998) claim, the existence of the camp does not disrupt the continuities between birth and nationality for most Palestinian refugees residing in Jordan. According to Oesch (2017), the majority of Palestinian refugees in Jordan have acquired Jordanian citizenship. This demonstrates that Palestinian refugees in Jordan are granted certain privileges and rights that come with being recognized as citizens of the country, highlighting the empowerment and agency they derive from their citizenship status. Building on this work, empirical outcomes from this research project illustrate how power is decentralized and distributed within the camp, aligning with McFarlane's (2009) concept of urban space as an *assemblage* influenced by multiple *actants*, including refugees.

The power individuals possess necessary to achieve their potential is referred to as *human agency* (Jane & Barker, 2016). Dalal (2018) defines refugees’ agency as the counterstrategies that refugees carry out to resist the system of control imposed on them by higher authorities. In this work, I aim to shed light on refugees’ agency performed through their *home-making* practices.

I begin by examining how refugees' *home-making* practices are carried out on a larger scale than simply that of the dwelling, thereby showcasing their agency in shaping the evolution of the camp and redefining its boundaries. The case studies have shown that this agency is shaped by the constraints imposed by global networks, yet it is also defined by refugees’ capacity to draw upon tradition and extra-local networks. For example, refugees can leverage power through relationships with fellow refugees outside Jordan (i.e., through money transferred to refugees from relatives outside the country). Refugees residing in the camps with the case studies, view

any Palestinian refugee, whether in Jordan or elsewhere, as one of them and part of their camp. According to Kh. Awad (personal communication, Al-Husn camp, December 2021), Palestinian refugees, regardless of their location, share the same struggle tied to a certain space-time stage of history (the Palestinian *Nakba*: see Endnote 22). Despite the physical boundaries of the camp, refugees outside Jordan are inexorably linked to refugees inside Jordan—their spaces in exile (alongside associated networks and resources) constitute an extension of their camps.

This is a process of extending the boundaries of the camp space beyond its geographical site, rendering them as dynamic, permeable and changeable. I examine these characteristics of camp boundaries through the sequential processes, described in the work of Deleuze & Guattari (1987), of *territorialization*, or inscription, and *de-territorialization*, or erasure. This understanding of territory as defined by a permeable boundary introduces its linkage to *assemblage* theory. This discussion of boundaries is not limited to the material or visible realm, but extends to invisible boundaries: virtual, diasporic, regulatory, administrative (i.e., UNRWA policies and governmental regulations), and informal connections and exchanges. The three case studies illustrate different instances where refugees' *home-making* practices have, collectively, contributed to the morphological expansion of the camp, resulting in a redefinition of its boundaries. For instance, in Talbiyeh camp, refugees through their *home-making* practices (i.e., moving towards the camp edges and beyond), drove an expansion that was predominantly horizontal, whereas in Baqa'a camp, expansion occurred vertically (i.e., through the practice of adding floors). That is, when refugees engage in specific *home-making* practices, it can shape the overall development and morphological expansion of a certain case, especially when driven by certain factors. For instance, refugees' *home-making* practices were influenced by the specific

micro-geographies and socio-cultural contexts in which they were situated, ultimately leading to the reshaping of camp boundaries. This process signifies an inherent cycle of *territorialization* and *de-territorialization* (refer to chapter 1 for further details of these processes).

After establishing the connection between refugees' *home-making* practices and camp boundaries, I delve into the application of these practices within refugees' immediate housing settlements. This approach is consistent with existing literature on *home-making* in refugee camps examined in this study, including the works of Ramadan (2013), Fiddian-Qasmiyeh (2013), and Maqusi (2021), which emphasizes the importance of material culture, architectural appropriation, and symbolic landscape. These findings show how refugees' *home-making* practices in housing settlements are neither recognized as formal nor seriously treated as informal (e.g., unauthorized modification or adaptation of the physical space within the camp, such as repurposing public spaces). Although these practices are considered informal, there is limited legal intervention. As a result, they exist in a gray zone,[26] occupying an ambiguous state where they are neither eliminated nor integrated.

Throughout the course of this study, I came to understand that refugees materially and symbolically pass on geo-political knowledge while making their homes, implicitly resisting a new reality (the camp) and grounding their beliefs in their *home-making* practices. For example, this study presents various examples where refugees include geo-political references in their *home-making* practices, i.e., clothing, crafts, arts, traditional cuisine, and murals referring to the Palestinian resistance. Viewing the camp as an *assemblage* allows for a conception of political life through the agency practiced by refugees (Ramadan, 2013). This recognition acknowledges

the agency of refugees exercised through their *home-making* practices at the level of their housing settlements.

Finally, I analyze how *home-making* applies to refugees' sustainable practices. Through the lens of *Environmentalism of the Poor (EOP),* I explore how refugees tend to adopt environmentally sustainable practices out of necessity or as a means of survival. *EOP* also provides insight into refugees' sustainable practices that aim to maintain their livelihoods, while simultaneously benefiting their environment (i.e., through urban agriculture, alternative energy practices, and waste management). The analysis of sustainable practices among refugees represents the third dimension through which *home-making* is manifested within the refugee camp.

Additionally, the policies and regulations of UNRWA and the Jordanian state have not only shaped refugees' *home-making* but have also been shaped by them. In order to understand the mechanisms through which these policies have evolved since the establishment of Palestinian refugee camps, I rely on studies of *policy mobilities* in my analysis. Examining the *policy mobilities* framework and its sensitivity to global policy models and best practices enables comprehension of the establishment and evolution of UNRWA camps over time. The initial camp layout was designed by the international corporation Conport. Despite the existence of alternative options, it was chosen due to extensive campaigning efforts with the Jordanian government, prioritizing capitalist interests over concerns of potential environmental and health risks. The findings presented in this analysis aim to challenge the prevailing perspective that emphasizes the role of top-down actors in the policy-making process. By highlighting the active involvement of refugees as policy-making actors within the framework of policy mobilities, I not only demonstrate their impact alongside other factors such as global tent shortages and international donors but also

emphasize their impact on the institution-making process of UNRWA itself. The study reveals that the role of UNRWA as an institution has undergone a transformation from a regulator to a facilitator, influenced by various factors identified in the research, including accusations of corruption, inefficiency, and hindering peace efforts from the Trump administration, who cut off the organization's funding (Nahmias, 2019). The examples discussed above present refugees as active, resisting constraining laws imposed on them. This conclusion suggests that a refugee's existence is not necessarily representative of *bare life* or *homo sacer*—a passive state described by Agamben (1998) in which one has been stripped of their political rights. As discussed above, most Palestinian refugees in Jordan are Jordanian citizens, thereby granting them political rights. They represent a case that does not align with Agier's (2012) description of the displaced, as they are neither rightless nor invisible. Rather, the displaced are citizens with political rights and obligations, resisting the system of control and confinement system imposed upon them and asserting their agency.

In this study, I not only demonstrate refugees' agency and its expression through their *home-making* practices but also acknowledge the potential and challenges associated with this agency. The lens of *assemblage* has helped to read the home and camp spaces as *assemblage* formations composed of changeable constituent components. However, empirical findings from various camps have enabled the identification of key factors that constitute the *assemblages* of both the home and the camp, thereby expanding the analytical framework of *assemblage* and highlighting that both spaces represent distinct forms of space-making.

Understanding the camp space through the *assemblage* framework leads to the second point I aim to demonstrate in this study, wherein I conceptualize the refugee camp as a fluid and

dynamic space. As noted earlier, existing literature falls short in capturing the temporal and spatial transformative dimensions of refugee camps, thus providing an incomplete picture of the camp that does not go beyond its physical boundaries and material qualities. This limitation, though not necessarily intentional, might contribute to a perception of these spaces as static, rigid, or bounded. For example, the situation of Palestinian refugees in Jordan unsettles the conception of the camp as a contemporary *heterotopian* space, where marginalized individuals are confined while a utopian city exists beyond its boundaries, as proposed by Isin & Rygiel (2007). This is evident in the fact that the majority of Palestinian refugees in Jordan possess Jordanian citizenship and enjoy the freedom to move in and out of the camp (Oesch, 2017). In this specific case, the camp does not serve solely as a restrictive space for its inhabitants.

In an effort to move beyond Agamben's concept of the *state of exception* and Agier's notion of the camp as a ghetto or *contemporary figure of heterotopia* or Isin & Rygiel's concept of *abject spaces*, which primarily evoke territorial associations of the camp, the research findings suggest a broader understanding of the camp that extends beyond its territorial dimension. Hardt & Negri's *Empire* (2001) has been instrumental in enhancing my comprehension of the refugee camp as a de-centered, boundless space. The camp offers an example of the dynamics described in *Empire*, wherein the material borders once imposed by imperialism have vanished, and sovereignty is no longer confined to the nation-state, but rather intertwined with global networks and the flow of capital.

6.3. Research Contributions: Findings

I seek to move beyond restrictive perspectives on refugee camps. Firstly, this involves shifting the focus from solely examining power structures to recognizing and highlighting the agency and contributions of refugees themselves. Secondly, it entails broadening the understanding of camps beyond territorial associations, transcending the perception of camps as static or bounded. In this section, I aim to provide in-depth analysis of the two primary research contributions. The first of these contributions presents an understanding of refugee camps through refugees' *home-making* practices. More specifically, it introduces refugee camps as *home-making assemblages*. The second primary contribution reconceptualizes the refugee camp as a dynamic and fluid space.

6.3.1. First Contribution: Refugee Camps as *Home-making Assemblages*

In an effort to broaden the scope of analysis beyond narrow approaches that offer an incomplete understanding of refugee camps and often overlook or under-represent the active role of refugees within them, my work builds upon studies that emphasize the agency of refugees, such as research conducted by Ramadan (2013). However, there are three distinct aspects that differentiate my work from Ramadan (2013) and other critiques of the restrictive approach to refugee camps. First, I examine the specific context of Jordan, where Palestinian refugees have a unique insider-outsider status within the broader political landscape, as many hold Jordanian citizenship, as noted by Oesch (2017). Second, I investigate the diverse manifestations of *home-making*: the camp, housing settlements, and the sustainable livelihood practices of refugees. Third, I offer a comparative lens to highlight the various forms that camp *assemblages* can take

within the same national and geopolitical setting. This approach offers valuable insights into how the agency of refugees is distinctly shaped in these three cases. The following sections elaborate on the three distinct ways I expand upon the study conducted by Ramadan (2013) and other scholars who move beyond hierarchical perspectives on camps.

6.3.1.1. The Case of Jordan: Palestinian Refugee Camps

In exploring the specific context of Jordan, it is important to acknowledge Jordan's annexation of the West Bank in 1950 and how it has impacted the status of Palestinian refugees in the country (Gabbay, 2014). Through this annexation, the West Bank came under Jordanian administration, leading to full Jordanian citizenship being granted to the residents of the West Bank (ibid.). Thus, the majority of Palestinians refugees in Jordan possess Jordanian citizenship. As Oesch (2017) highlights, this unique insider-outsider status within the broader political landscape is a result of many Palestinians holding Jordanian citizenship.

The acquisition of Jordanian citizenship allows Palestinian refugees to be socially integrated and politically involved within Jordan. Acknowledging this allows for a better understanding of the complexities of the refugee experience in Jordan and how citizenship shapes their agency and interactions within the camp and broader society.

6.3.1.2. Manifestations of Home-making: the Camp, the Dwelling, and Sustainable Livelihood Practices

I aim to contribute to the literature on *home-making* in refugee camps by examining the different manifestations of these practices. Instead of primarily concentrating on the level of dwelling, which is the central focus in most studies on *home-making* practices in refugee camps, as evident

in the works of Dudley (2011) and Albadra & Hart (2018), this study explores refugees' agency at a broader scale and how they collaborate collectively to govern their camp environment.

The empirical findings illustrate *home-making* as a multi-scalar process with different manifestations at different scales. Using the *assemblage* approach to read home space within the camp helps elucidate this multiplicity of *home-making* expressions across different scales. This study examines and provides insight into the constellation of actors and how they contribute to creating the home, which in turn, offers a better understanding of the different manifestations of *home-making* in the camp. Based on empirical and archival research, I illustrate three manifestations of *home-making*: the camp, in which I refer to the historical evolution of camp boundaries and layout; housing settlements, in which I include material and symbolic features of refugees' home, and finally, sustainable livelihood practices of refugees within camps.

First Manifestation of Home-making: The Camp

The first manifestation of *home-making* involves refugees' *home-making* practices and how they have shaped camp boundaries and evolution. This analysis begins with the first camp layout set by UNRWA. Although UNRWA was intended as the primary regulator of Palestinian camps in Jordan (e.g., determining the layout and boundaries) (Hanafi et al., 2014), the internal structuring of camps was instead a refugee-led process that proved influential in the design of future camps. This technique was based on a socio-cultural framework developed by refugees. From the research outcomes, I underline two main determinants in forming the socio-cultural framework of the camps: first, the different segments of the Palestinian population, mainly *Fallahi* vs. *Bedouin* (i.e., peasants vs. nomads), and second, the dominant culture of the region, which is

influenced by Islamic teachings. To illustrate the first determinant, the example of Talbiyeh camp shows a clear divide between the location of the *Fallahi* families, who prefer to stay within the camp borders, and the Bedouin who have chosen to locate themselves outside the boundaries of the camp for socio-cultural purposes (i.e., more privacy, open space). This division at the camp scale between these two segments of the refugee population manifests through refugees' *home-making*, with refugees distributing themselves, and accordingly their homes, based on socio-cultural differences, shaping camp layout and boundaries.

The second determinant speaks to the expressive qualities (as *assemblage* theory suggests) and values that the built environment (in this case, the home) represents. The empirical findings identify the socio-cultural values identified in the work of Alqub (2016) as part of Islamic architecture[27] through the material and non-material *home-making* practices of refugees. In other words, the socio-cultural values expressed in the camps mirror values emphasized in Islamic architecture (e.g., *equity, privacy, respect, modesty, connectivity, adaptability, aesthetic appreciation*),[28] reflecting the influence of this determinant on refugees' *home-making* practices, and, accordingly shaping the socio-cultural framework of the camp.

Second Manifestation of Home-making: The Dwelling

The second manifestation of *home-making* is connected to the material and symbolic features of refugees' homes. Within this framework, *home-making refers to* adaptive practices that alter the material and symbolic qualities of physical dwellings (or houses) to transform them into homes. This point aligns with De Landa's (2006) argument regarding the material and expressive functions of a given *assemblage*. In essence, an *assemblage* is inherently both material and

expressive, encompassing both the qualitative characteristics of its elements (expressive role) and their physical attributes (material role) (Muminovec, 2013). However, in any *assemblage*, there is a connection made between its representational meanings and its material aspects (Dovey, 2009). Therefore, approaching *home-makin*g as an *assemblage* formation requires reflecting on the expressive role of its elements, not only their material roles. Thus, drawing on the insights of scholars in the field of *assemblage*, such as De Landa (2006) and Muminovec (2013) I look at *home-making* as *assemblage* formation that incorporates material and expressive roles, with the expressive role referring to the qualitative characteristics of its elements (symbolic features) and the material role referring to its physical characteristics. Most often, relevant work focuses on physical *home-making* practices, whether carried out by refugees or other parties. However, in this research, I conclude that refugees, while making their home, are not only building a place that is physically comfortable, but also seek to incorporate expressive qualities (security, autonomy, identity reflection, connectedness, independence).[29] For example, cooking and embroidery practices in the camp represent an *assemblage* of material and expressive characteristics. The material product of these skills (e.g., embroidered dresses, traditional food) carries implicit expressive qualities (i.e., nostalgia, identity preservation, historical legacy), thereby embodying both the material and expressive aspects of that *assemblage*. Furthermore, the research sheds light on how socio-spatial inequalities and power dynamics can shape the agency of refugees and their *home-making* practices. This point aligns with *assemblage* theory, which stresses the role of human and non-human factors in shaping a given *assemblage*, in this case the *assemblage* of *home-making.*

Third Manifestation of Home-making: Sustainable livelihood practices

The third manifestation of *home-making* involves refugees' sustainable livelihood practices that promote environmental sustainability. Here, refugees' sustainable livelihood practices refer to the coping methods employed by refugees to address resource challenges encountered in the camp. Understanding the transitory nature of the *assemblage* approach has helped explain the survival of refugees' livelihoods in camps through their sustainable *home-making* practices, despite the associated economic and socio-cultural challenges. Recognizing these practices as environmentally sustainable *assemblages* based on changing constitutive factors highlights the fluidity and resilience inherent to these practices, challenging constraints to the survival of refugees' livelihoods and highlighting the extent to which refugees' survival *home-making* practices can promote environmental sustainability.

In addition to the *assemblage* approach, I use the concept of *Environmentalism of the Poor* (*EOP)* (Guha, 2002; Nixon, 2011), which views sustainability critically and, with a bottom-up orientation. The concept of *EOP* explores how the poor (in this context, refugees) tend to adopt sustainable practices out of necessity, as a means to survive. (*EOP*) offers insights into refugees' sustainable *home-making* practices, which encompass the preservation of their livelihoods in terms of both dwelling adaptations and home economics, while also yielding environmental benefits. In this study, I identify three main groups of refugees' sustainable *home-making* practices that contribute to the survival of their livelihoods, while contributing to environmental sustainability. These practices include urban agriculture (i.e., roof gardening), alternative energy practices (i.e., solar panels), and waste management practices (i.e., recycling practices). Through the

approaches of *assemblage* and EOP, I recognize refugees' sustainable livelihood practices within the camp as the third manifestation of refugees' *home-making.*

In sum, the three manifestations of *home-making* underscore the role of refugees in shaping camp developments. The application of *assemblage* theory helps to emphasize the refugee as a key actor within the camp *assemblage* by acknowledging the agency of refugees while also dispersing power that is typically perceived as centralized or hegemonic within top-down models. The following section underlines how refugee agency shaped, producing different forms of camp *assemblages* within the same setting.

6.3.1.3. Offering a Comparative Lens: Highlighting the Diverse Forms of Camp *Assemblages* within a Shared National and Geopolitical Setting

Discussing the agency of refugees highlights how the study recognizes the agency of refugees while also acknowledging power dynamics at play. It brings to the forefront the inherent tension between the powerful and the powerless. In this tension, both sides are often seen as binary, while the case studies show how they instead connect and overlap. That is, refugees became powerful when they felt powerless, thus performing their agency and resisting higher authorities. The empirical aspect of this study shows that refugees are more powerful than they realize, for example through informal shelter expansion that can involve encroaching onto street areas, or by exerting collective pressure on UNRWA to increase the permitted number of floors within structures. Given this, limiting the definition of power to only UNRWA and the Jordanian government, thereby rendering refugees powerless and subjugated to the powerful, is short-sighted. Power is based on flows of information, connections, people, money, and geographical

sites. It emerges from the relations between the components and flows making up the camp *assemblage*.

The agency of refugees exercised in a given *assemblage* is based on the different flows and connections constituting that *assemblage.* With this in mind, I adopt a comparative lens to examine the *home-making* practices of refugees in the three case studies. Although I do not conduct a systematic comparison between the three camps, insights from various micro-geographies, such as analyses of soil conditions, and socio-cultural backgrounds (i.e., Bedouin or *Falllahi*) emphasize the importance of comprehending how refugees' practices, and accordingly their agency, are co-constituted by the socio-spatial contexts of which they are a part. This becomes evident through the specific alterations made to the boundaries and built environment conditions of the camp, as well as the differences that emerge across the camps. This finding draws attention to how power can be expressed differently when there is a different constellation of components and flows within an *assemblage*, even when some key components (i.e., UNRWA and the Jordanian government) remain the same.

For instance, one of the empirical findings illustrates that there is a connection between the camps' morphological transformations driven by refugees' *home-making* (e.g., the urbanization of the camp, urban sprawl, or the vertical and horizontal expansion of the camps' built environment) and physical geographical features of the camp sites (e.g., sand, water, topography, etc.). For example, Talbiyeh camp was established on sandy soil, while Baqa'a and Al-Husn were built on agricultural land. Talbiyeh camp's evolution diverges from the other two camps due to key physical and geographical differences.

First, building a structure on agricultural land is more stable than doing so on sandy land. The latter is more costly, especially when expanding vertically. Thus, examples of vertical expansion of buildings were rarest in Talbiyeh when compared to the other case studies. Second, the housing unit installed in Talbiyeh camp was different from those installed in Baqa'a' and Al-Husn, due to the fact Talbiyeh was built by the Iranian Red Lion and Sun Society[29] rather than UNRWA. This resulted in a difference in construction materials used across the three camps. In contrast to the asbestos material used in the other two cases built by UNRWA at the time, the Iranian Red Lion and Sun Society utilized concrete in the housing units they constructed in Talbiyeh. Concrete blocks are more durable, safer and better in quality compared to asbestos sheets. Additionally, Talbiyeh's initial layout was composed of blocks of five contiguous units (for five families), limiting refugees' ability to expand their living quarters when compared to Baqa'a and Al-Husn. Therefore, the diversity of ways homes have evolved in Talbiyeh camp is less vivid than the other two cases—a consequence of this restriction of refugees' agency. Although this restricts agency to some extent, it does not stifle it entirely (see the case of F. Al Hatabeh in Chapter 4). This highlights the correlation between exercised agency and diversity in *home-making* practices in refugee camps.

Geographical and physical differences across the three cases have influenced the way refugees construct their homes and consequently the way each camp has evolved. The decisions that refugees make in terms of their material (e.g., addition of floors and connection between units) and non-material (e.g., oral histories passed down generationally) *home-making* are a reflection of their agency. This agency was shaped by networks and connections that function within and beyond the camp space (e.g., policies, land geological capacity, micro-geography, economy,

socio-cultural factors, etc.). Therefore, examining these three cases has provided insight into how the different constellations of actants shape refugees' agency distinctively. Accordingly, refugees' expression of power is different in each case, and is expressed through each camps' individual development, resulting in different forms of camp *assemblages* within the same national and geo-political setting.

Contribution to Policy Mobility Literature

In addition to examining the impact of refugees on the physical boundaries and built environment of the camp, my research also delves into the realm of regulatory boundaries, encompassing governmental and institutional regulations and policies. As a result, my work contributes to the literature on *policy mobility.* Similar to existing studies that aim to challenge top-down perspectives on the policy-making process, the research findings demonstrate the active involvement of refugees in these processes. Moreover, they reveal that refugees, as policy-making actors, possess the ability to shape even dominant policy-making institutions such as UNRWA.

Contribution to the Literature on Assemblage Theory: The Camp vs. the Home Assemblage

The findings in relation to *home-making* practices across different scales and camps also advances existing literature on *assemblage* theory. By providing a more nuanced view of the key factors that either constrain or enable refugees' agency, the study widens the *assemblage's* frame of analysis, demonstrating that refugees' relative agency can operate differently at

different scales and across different camps, owing to their relative positioning vis-à-vis the distinct set of components and flows making up a given *assemblage*.

For example, in this study, the camp and the home are both read as *assemblage* formations, but at different scales. In the *assemblage* of the camp, the home is a component and also in itself an *assemblage*. Although both forms are similar in terms of the components and flows making up their *assemblages,* my findings show how different they are as forms of space-making. Despite the difficulty inherent in describing all the components of complex systems such as the camp and the home, in my fieldwork, I was able to identify key components and flows coming in and out of these two systems. Identifying these flows and components was possible due to the *assemblage* approach as a lens of analysis. Identifying the components of these *assemblages* has shown a broader scope and reach of the actual space of the camp. While traditional accounts rely on the demarcated boundaries set by higher authorities (i.e., the Jordanian state, UNRWA), the *assemblage* approach allows for an understanding of the camp as operating beyond its identified limits, encompassing diasporic spaces, online spaces, memories, aspirations, homeland, etc.

Based on fieldwork, I identify the flows and components making up the camp's *assemblage as follows*: UNRWA (providing the initial layout and facilitating camp construction), the Jordanian government (regulator), global networks (i.e., neoliberalism, capitalism, other political economic factors), construction material, refugees, the physical environment, international donors, and geopolitical conflict.

Likewise, I identify the components and flows of the home *assemblage* as follows: refugees, general regulations set by UNRWA and the Jordanian government, construction materials (either provided by UNRWA or through refugee procurement), socio-economic factors (flows of money

into the camp from refugees' relatives residing outside the camps), socio-cultural traditions from the country of origin (material culture, food culture), NGOs, and micro-geography. The flows & components of both camp and home *assemblages* and the relations between them are presented in Figure 58.

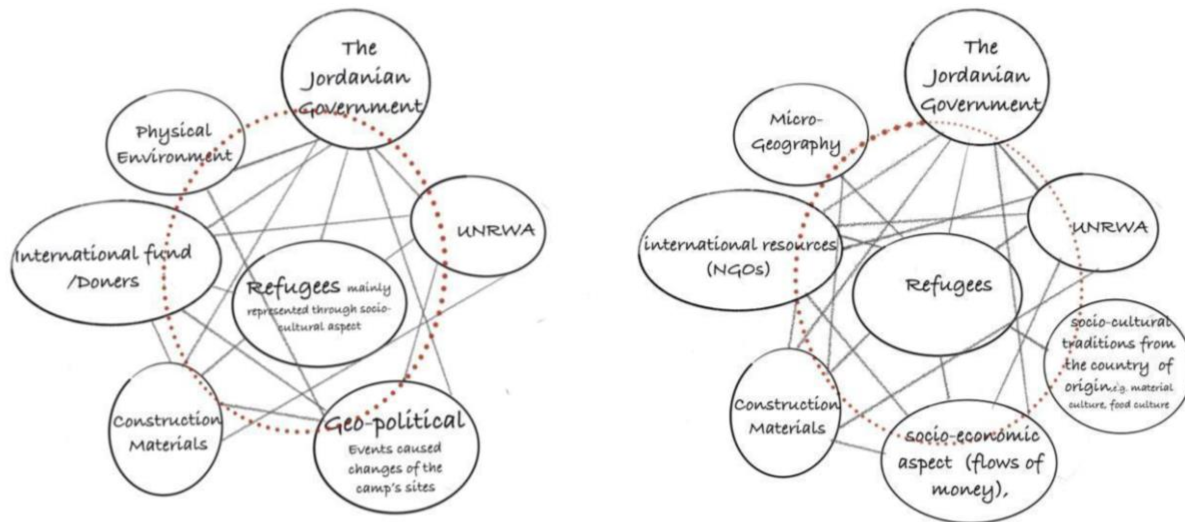


Figure 58. To the left, a sketch shows the identified flows & components of the *assemblage* of the refugee camp. The sketch to the right illustrates the identified flows & components of the *assemblage* of the home in the camp. Both illustrations attempt to visualize how components connect and interact with each other. Each line links two components, indicating a relation between them. These flows & components interact at different scales and dimensions, some of which are local, while others are global/international. These diagrams are meant to provide a visual manifestation of the way that components of *assemblages* are related. Emphasis should be placed on the relations rather than the components themselves. Through the use of a dotted red circle, I differentiate between the camp/house *assemblage* and the actual camp/home space and delineate the estimated boundaries of the camp/home space where the flows and components appear as operating beyond these boundaries (Alqub, 2023).

While both home and camp *assemblages* are constituted by many similar components and flows, they also diverge in some regards. Although on a smaller scale compared to the camp, home is still influenced by international or global factors (e.g., resources refugees can leverage from global networks, social-cultural traditions from the country of origin, and flows of money from relatives living abroad), these factors may differ across scales. The home is shaped by many of the same elements and flows as the camp within which it is situated, but also shaped by the

household's resources, networks, and the material and symbolic features of living space. This point demonstrates refugee agency as it operates at both scales (home and camp). However, it indicates a greater agency at the scale of the home.

To clarify this point, I highlight how global networks (i.e., capitalist globalization) are externally imposed dynamics on the camp, while showing how refugees' *home-making* operates from within the camp, revealing their agency. For example, Hanafi et al. (2014) discuss the efforts of the corporation Conport to lobby the Jordanian government which influenced the selection of the camp's layout. Conport incorporated modernist planning strategies as a developmental model in their proposed layout. Modern architecture, at the time, adopted a universal design sense that ignored local dynamics and local sense of place while calling for unified shared values (e.g., mass production, modularity, efficiency, etc.) (Hansen, 2009). This approach suspends historical legacies and acts at a universal scale, producing new norms and authority. Additionally, due to a global shortage of tents and the pressure exerted by Conport, the Jordanian government selected their model, disregarding the associated environmental and health hazards (ibid.). Specifically, the chosen asbestos material posed various risks. This is supported by a study conducted by Berman and Crump (2008), which highlights the various hazards associated with asbestos material, such as its flammability and the potential for severe health conditions like lung cancer and mesothelioma through the inhalation of asbestos fibers.

Although this model presents limited opportunity for users to exercise agency, the empirical findings demonstrate that refugees creatively perform their agency through gradual *home-making* practices. This process can be analyzed through the concept of *piecemeal growth* of the built environment, as advanced by Alexander (1975), who critiques architectural modernism, [30]

highlighting its failure to consider the specific characteristics of the surrounding context, which are typically present in traditional buildings. He emphasizes the importance of context-specific architectural features that distinguish local architecture in a particular space from other types, such as vernacular architecture. Despite this, refugees produce and integrate meaning and social association (i.e., values, aspirations, memories) into their spaces distinctively in the three cases, shaping camp development and resisting the notion of this space as being created only by those in positions of power. In contrast to camp dynamics that are mostly externally imposed, refugees' *home-making* operates from the inside, rendering the camp and home as different forms of space-making.

6.3.2. Second Contribution: Reconceptualizing the Camp as Dynamic and Fluid Space

The research findings extend beyond a conceptualization of the camp that invokes territorial associations and results in perceiving the camp as a static space with defined boundaries (including regulatory or administrative boundaries). It goes beyond the perspectives presented in *state of exception* (Agamben, 1998), *contemporary figures of heterotopias* (Agier, 2012), and *abject spaces* (Isin & Rygiel, 2007), which under-acknowledge the diverse power dynamics, governance structures, and socio-political processes and flows that exist within the camp. In this study, I seek to show how the camp is more than a territorially bounded entity, instead operating beyond its boundaries, through the lens of *assemblage*. *Assemblage* theory has provided a more nuanced and broader point of view to analyze the camp space as a complex territory, representing it as a mesh of networks, distributed flows, forces, information, people, etc. By

examining the changes in the built environment in camps, I aim to address the broader social, cultural, and political dynamics that shape and define the camp as a fluid space.

This reconceptualizing of the camp also contributes to *assemblage* theory, as there are relatively few accounts that focus on the spatiality of the theory (examples of such accounts include the works of McFarlane (2011), Dovey (2010), Hillier (2017a, 2017b) and De la Llata (2021) and similar studies of identity and spatial boundaries in protest encampments (De la Llata, 2016, 2021)). Understanding the spatial aspect of *assemblage* theory is crucial in comprehending how the physical and built environment both shape and are shaped by socio-cultural, political, and economic processes in a given *assemblage*. In the case of the refugee camp, the research findings illustrate how the built environment (in this case, the home) influences the level of agency of camp dwellers and the functioning of the camp *assemblage* in general.

Emphasizing the spatiality of the camp is significant because it provides insights into how the spatial configurations of the camp, including physical and virtual geographies, urban planning, and camp layout, affect the flow of resources, movement of people, power dynamics, and possibilities that emerge within similar contexts. By employing the theoretical approach of *assemblage*, I was able to gain insights into how the spatial configurations of the camp influence the stability/instability and development of the camp's *assemblage*.

6.3. Conclusion

I began this research with the following research questions:

1. What kinds of *home-making* practices do refugees engage in within the refugee camp setting?
2. What is the level of agency the refugees have to shape, conceive and imagine their own living spaces and the factors that influence this agency?
3. How are camps spatially and temporally constructed and how is this defined by exchanges, interactions and flows within and beyond their boundaries?

These questions prompted me to realize that many studies on camps focus on the powerlessness rather than the agency of refugees, provoking inquiries into the role of refugees in shaping the development of the camp through their *home-making* practices. These questions ultimately led me to contemplate how *home-making* is an expression of refugees' agency. Although each case study exists under the same governance system and was established under similar circumstances (i.e., host state, time period, etc.) each presents distinct manifestations of refugee agency and the morphological evolution of the camp. To analyze the fluidity and multiplicity of the three cases, I apply *assemblage* theory as the theoretical framework for this study. This approach reads any entity as *assemblages* made of human and non-human components and flows that continuously interact and change constantly.

Examining the refugee camp through *assemblage* theory, along with archival and empirical research, has yielded significant insight into the field of refugee camps and has resulted in two main contributions. The first contribution involves the conceptualization of refugee camps as

home-making assemblages, building upon previous studies that acknowledge the agency of refugees, such as Ramadan's (2013) research on Palestinian refugee camps in Lebanon. Nevertheless, this study diverges from Ramadan (2013) and other criticisms of the top-down perspective of camps in three ways as follows.

First, this study is conducted in Jordan, where many Palestinian refugees hold citizenship, as noted by Oesch (2017). Second, the findings illustrate three distinct manifestations of *home-making:* the camp, housing settlements, and sustainable livelihood practices of refugees. Third, the research adopts a comparative lens, highlighting the various forms that camp *assemblages* can take within the same national and geopolitical context. The use of the *assemblage* approach acknowledges the agency of refugees while also re-examining power that is often centralized or hegemonic among top-down actors and models. The comparative lens used in this study provides valuable insights into the ways refugee agency of refugees is shaped differently by micro-geographies, socio-cultural traditions, and networks associated with each case. One finding that illustrates the agency of refugees is their influence on the development of UNRWA institutional policies related to shelter construction within camps. This finding highlights the significant role of refugees in the policy-making process within the camp, positioning them as policy makers themselves (for example, through influencing policy regarding number of floors in a dwelling). They not only contribute to the re-shaping of policies enforced in the camp but also exert influence over the dominant policy-making institution, UNRWA. *Assemblage* theory facilitates an examination of how power can manifest in different ways depending on the configuration of *assemblage* components and flows, even when some key components remain unchanged (such as UNRWA and the Jordanian state). Consequently, I demonstrate how the *assemblages* of home

and the camp represent two distinct forms of space-making, highlighting the components and flows that constitute each respective *assemblage*.

The second main contribution of this study challenges the perception of the camp as static and bounded. Instead, I reconceptualize the refugee camp as a fluid and dynamic entity characterized by flows and exchanges that operate beyond its boundaries. This reading of the space offers lessons for theory and practice in different disciplines, including urban planning, policy-making, architecture and design. This study also seeks to contribute to the literature on refugee camps, *home-making,* policy-mobility, and *assemblage* theory.

6.4. Research Significance

Theoretical Implications

The increase in forced displacement across the globe and associated flows of refugees have resulted in a variety of manifestations of refugee camps (Sanyal, 2012). The literature on this topic has adopted universal “myths about refugees and refugee camps as subjects and spaces of bare life and bio-politics alone” (Sanyal, 2012, p. 633). These representations that depict the refugee camp as a space of “exile and confinement” (González-Ruibal, 2021, p. 370) and the refugee as *naked life* (Agamben, 1998) present a scope limited to “repressive geographies of asylum and refuge” (Ramadan, 2013, p. 65) and exclude the multiplicity of spaces and practices the refugee camp holds. In this research, I address the complexity of the camp as a socio-spatial phenomenon, representing its fluidity. I begin by outlining how existing literature misses the dynamic nature of these spaces and largely center the discussion on power structures when studying camps.

Based on the previously identified gaps in literature, I utilize a theoretical framework that considers *assemblage* theory in reading camp space as dynamic and multiple. I use this approach to read the camp as operating beyond its actual boundaries, differentiating between *camp space* and the *camp assemblage,* with camp space referring to the bounded, fixed space of the camp as demarcated by physical boundaries and administrative limits, whereas camp *assemblage* perceives the camp as more than its physical space. This study not only views the camp space as an *assemblage*, but also uses the *assemblage* lens to understand that ultimately everything is an *assemblage*, and that actants interrelate, connect, and create networks. Based on that, I view refugees' *home-making* as *assemblage* formations. Through this, I understand the camp through refugees' *home-making* practices, exploring how both camp and home *assemblages* relate and connect. This framework unsettles the common use of binaries in theory and rethinks seeming contradictions in a system of *assemblages*, detached and plugged into one another constantly over time.

The use of *assemblage* in this study has facilitated a bottom-up approach to the field of refugee camps and has helped develop an understanding of the often neglected role of the refugee in shaping camp space through *home-making* practices. In doing so, the research findings contribute to the realm of theory by bringing together three sizable bodies of literature: *assemblage* theory, refugee camps, and *home-making* studies in order to gain insights into spaces of refuge and shelter.

Practical Implications

The research findings illustrate the flows and components making up camp and home *assemblage*s. These findings benefit practitioners and policy makers in the field of refugee camps. Specifically, the research findings move beyond and broaden the limiting understanding of camps, prompting a re-evaluation of the spatial composition and multidimensionality of these spaces. By examining the different layers that contribute to the formation of a camp (the meta-spatial perspective), the study disrupts the fixed and often limited perception held by some practitioners. It highlights the need to unsettle preconceived notions and encourages a comprehensive understanding of camps as complex and multifaceted environments. This rethinking process holds immense potential for driving innovation and progress in the design and management of refugee camps.

For example, the study has shown how the design of refugee camps has traditionally focused on physical infrastructure and logistical aspects, while neglecting the socio-cultural dimension of these spaces. The research findings shed light on the often-overlooked dynamics that shape the social and cultural fabric of camps (e.g., ethnic and religious backgrounds). By recognizing and incorporating these socio-cultural dimensions, professionals responsible for designing camp models can foster environments that better meet the needs and aspirations of the displaced populations they serve.

This is not to applaud the presence of refugee camps, but rather present a non-romanticized, practical way to deal with the reality of an increasing number of refugees and refugee camps across the globe. This understanding can help enhance the everyday socio-economic and political

living conditions of thousands of refugees around the world. Conceiving of the refugee as a powerful actor within the *assemblage* of the camp (thereby promoting an inclusive environment for refugees) can also provide economic and environmental benefits for host countries by encouraging the development of sustainable and productive employment sectors. Moreover, the research findings highlight the potential of *assemblage* theory in enhancing the concept of sustainability. Utilizing the *assemblage* approach has helped recognize the crucial role of refugees in shaping the development of camps and sustaining their livelihoods as no less important than any other factor in this process. Thus, it is crucial to focus on developing strategies for refugees that render them as contributors rather than passive recipients. One important approach is to involve refugees in the camp development process itself.

By incorporating refugees' knowledge and experiences, we can leverage their expertise to address various challenges and promote sustainable development within the camp. This inclusive approach not only empowers refugees but also enhances the overall resilience and sustainability of the camp.

6.5. Research Limitations & Recommendation on Further Work

Research Limitations

The study adopts a complex and non-linear *assemblage* approach, which poses challenges in determining a suitable thesis structure to effectively present the complex entanglement inherent in this theory. It was crucial to provide a clear representation of the interconnected elements and dynamics of both the camp and home *assemblages*. To accomplish this, a categorization process was employed to present these components and flows without compartmentalizing them. The

overlap between these components is illustrated in each chapter and throughout the discussion section, helping to alleviate the tension arising from the seemingly separate structure of *assemblage* components.

Other research limitations constrained a more in-depth exploration of the *assemblages* involved with the case studies. For instance, UNRWA limiting access to institutional archives served as a roadblock to further exploration. Regardless of this controlled access, a significant quantity of useful data on Palestinian refugee camps in Jordan was ultimately collected. Despite these constraints, the research findings have shed light on important issues and provide recommendations for further work in the field of refugee camps.

Recommendations for Further Work

This work can serve as a point of departure for future work and research in the fields of refugee camps, policy-making, and urban planning, including for professionals who design and implement camp models. Additionally, institutions responsible for Palestinian camps in Jordan (UNRWA, the DPA) can make use of the research findings in understanding how policies could be further integrative, for example, through participatory planning strategies. This can connect a wide range of experts in relevant fields (economists, policymakers, designers, planners, engineers, social workers, etc.) to develop further inclusive solutions to refugee marginalization.

In the field of urban design, architecture, and urban planning, reading the camp space as a whole can widen practitioners' understanding of these spaces beyond their physical limits. Architects and planners often seek to design the "ideal refugee camp" (Dalal, 2018, p. 64). However, this

treats the camp space as a singularity, assuming its properties exemplify the sum of its parts. In contrast, the *assemblage* approach views the space as made up of multiple, non-linear layers that function through the relations between its components rather than the components themselves.

This understanding can translate in the physical world through the creation of more inclusive spaces. Further work can be done to democratize decision-making processes related to the development of refugee camps, promoting refugee agency through flexibility and adaptability in camp models. From a structural point of view, certain design techniques (e.g., expandable structures, lightweight materials, modular construction, open floor plans) could be adopted by professionals to achieve adaptability and flexibility in camp structures (Scuderi, 2019). These techniques can be integrated in future camp models, allowing for further transformation and changes to the design of the structure to take place, for example, using modular construction allows for prefabricated components to be easily assembled, disassembled, and reconfigured, enabling rapid deployment and adaptability to changing needs. Designing camp structures with flexible layouts, such as open floor plans or movable partitions, enables easy customization and adaptation to different uses and family sizes. These design techniques not only allow for functional flexibility but also enable the incorporation of socio-cultural values into the camp model. For instance, the number, size, and location of the structure's openings can be tailored to respond to specific socio-cultural preferences, such as ensuring privacy. These examples highlight the value of recognizing refugee needs as a key component of the camp *assemblage*.

Exploded Architectural Diagrams (Li et al., 2008) can provide a starting point to connecting *assemblage* theory and architecture. In this approach, the architect de-assembles a design into

its parts, demonstrating how separate parts fit together in the final design. It also shows the invisible parts that are hidden by other external parts. Through the use of lines or arrows in the diagram, the relationships between the disassembled parts can be traced and understood. In this approach to architectural design, a visualization of the arrangement of the design's components and their scale provides an understanding of how a system works and is maintained in a way that written texts cannot (Figure 59). This approach shares much in common with the *assemblage* theory in that it can translate a system or a design into components with clearly identified connections and networks. Further work can explore potential correlation between *assemblage* and exploded architectural diagrams, through which visual architectural techniques and software can be utilized to help understand the material components and flows of a given *assemblage*.

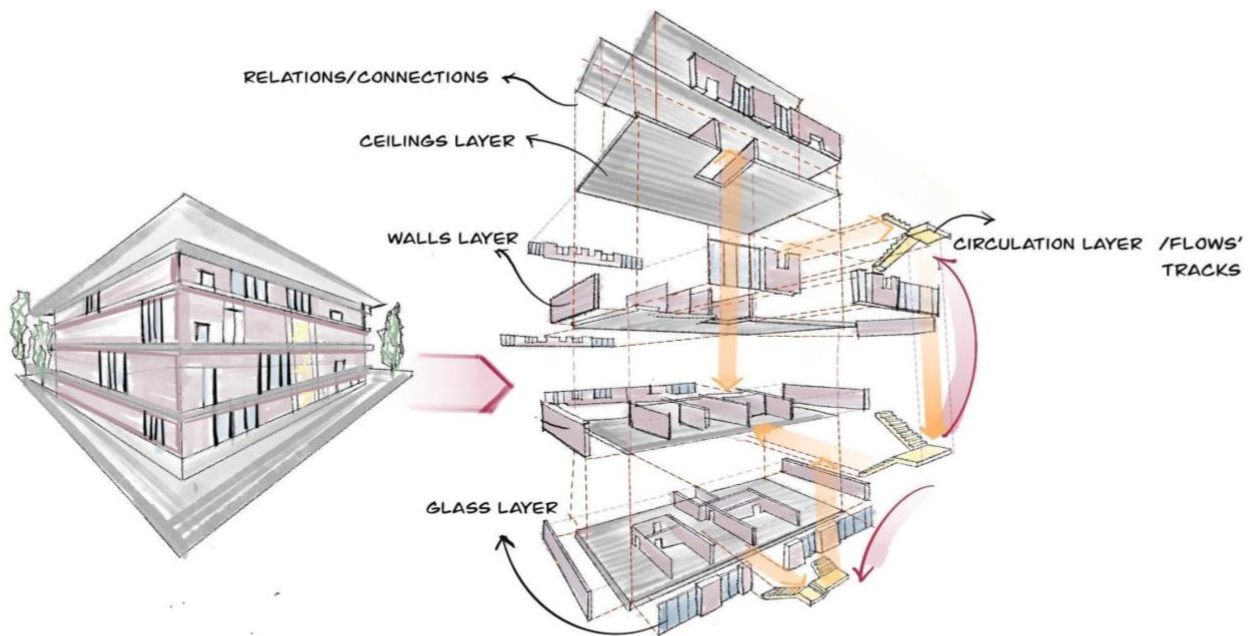


Figure 59. Exploded architectural diagrams disassemble the architectural design into separate elements, showing how they connect to each other through dotted lines. These dotted lines illustrate the arrangement of the disassembled elements and how they relate to the whole structure, making its functionality possible. The thick orange lines illustrate the circulation movement or the tracks of the flows accessing and using this design (Alqub, 2023).

In summary, a refugee camp is more than just a political space that regulates a group of people sharing the same ethnicity or background. It should not be equated with a defined territory governed by a coercive and powerful entity. Rather, a refugee camp is a place imbued with meanings and associations when viewed from the perspective of the everyday lives of refugees. It is an *assemblage* of material and non-material components and flows connecting and interacting. In the camp *assemblage,* power is not unidirectional. Through the lens of *assemblage*, power is de-centered and agency is ascribed to refugees, rendering them as key actors in the camp *assemblage*. The agency of refugees is manifested in their refusal to be marginalized, silenced or excluded. It reflects a deep desire to live a stable life, while resisting imposed constraints. Refugees do not give up their right to return to their homeland when they decide to live with full rights in exile. They are powerful enough to re-define camp boundaries, extending them to encompass their homeland, their diaspora, virtual spaces, and fellow refugees in exile. This reading of the Palestinian refugee camp in Jordan does not seek to impose a unified model on other cases; but rather aims to provoke critical, explanatory questions that interrogate the everyday lives of the displaced. To conclude, any approach to refugee camps should be integrative, multidimensional, meta-spatial, and human sensitive.

In closing, I highlight the valuable words of Mahmoud Darwish, the “national poet of Palestine” and the “voice of the Palestinian people” (Yushurun, 2012, p. 46). His description of exile resonates deeply:

“Exile is so strong within me. I might bring it to the land.”

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U. Al-Hatabeh, interviewed at Talbiyeh camp, Amman, Jordan (December 2021). In Arabic. Translated to English by the author.

H. Al-Hatabeh, interviewed at Talbiyeh camp, Amman, Jordan (December 2021). In Arabic. Translated to English by the author.

H. Mawali, interviewed at Al-Husn camp, Irbid, Jordan (December 2021). In Arabic. Translated to English by the author.

J. Shatarat, interviewed at Baqa'a camp, Balqa, Jordan (January 2022). In Arabic. Translated to English by the author.

S. Araisheh and his son (2 interviewees), interviewed at Baqa'a camp, Balqa, Jordan (January 2022). In Arabic. Translated to English by the author.

U. Jadallah, interviewed at Baqa'a camp, Balqa, Jordan (January 2022). In Arabic. Translated to English by the author.

F. Al-Hatabeh, interviewed at Talbiyeh camp, Amman, Jordan (December 2021). In Arabic. Translated to English by the author.

J. Araisheh, interviewed at Baqa'a camp, Balqa, Jordan (January 2022). In Arabic. Translated to English by the author.

Kh. Awwad, interviewed at Al-Husn camp, Irbid, Jordan (December 2021). In Arabic. Translated to English by the author.

E. sqour, DPA staff member, interviewed at Al-Husn camp, Irbid, Jordan (December 2021). In Arabic. Translated to English by the author.

O. sqour and his wife (2 interviewees), interviewed at Al-Husn camp, Irbid, Jordan (November 2021). In Arabic. Translated to English by the author.

F. Saba'awi, interviewed at Talbiyeh camp, Amman, Jordan (December 2021). In Arabic. Translated to English by the author.

A group of Bedouin ladies (6 interviewees), interviewed at Talbiyeh camp, Amman, Jordan (December 2021). In Arabic. Translated to English by the author.

The UNRWA ICIP team in Amman (5 interviewees) , Jordan, interviewed in April 2021. In Arabi. Translated to English by the author.

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A.Bilal, interviewed at Al-Husn camp, Irbid, Jordan (November 2022). In Arabic. Translated to English by the author.

Y. Abu alrub, his wife, and son (3 interviewees), interviewed at Al-Husn camp, Irbid, Jordan (November 2022). In Arabic. Translated to English by the author.

N. Morouj, his wife, and daughter (3 interviewees), interviewed at Al-Husn camp, Irbid, Jordan (November 2022). In Arabic. Translated to English by the author.

M. Sqour, interviewed at Al-Husn camp, Irbid, Jordan (November 2022). In Arabic. Translated to English by the author.

Abu. Sqour, interviewed at Al-Husn camp, Irbid, Jordan (November 2022). In Arabic. Translated to English by the author.

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Bedouin ladies living in the tents (2 interviewees), interviewed at Talbiyeh camp, Amman, Jordan (December 2021). In Arabic. Translated to English by the author.

U. Jbarat, interviewed at Talbiyeh camp, Amman, Jordan (December 2021). In Arabic. Translated to English by the author.

U. Saba'awi and her daughter (2 interviewees), interviewed at Talbiyeh camp, Amman, Jordan (December 2021). In Arabic. Translated to English by the author.

Q. Shtaiyeh, UNRWA staff member, interviewed at Talbiyeh camp, Amman, Jordan (December 2021). In Arabic. Translated to English by the author.

A. Shteiwi and his wife (2 interviewees), interviewed at Talbiyeh camp, Amman, Jordan (December 2021). In Arabic. Translated to English by the author.

U. Zeid, interviewed at Talbiyeh camp, Amman, Jordan (December 2021). In Arabic. Translated to English by the author.

S. Abu luz and her mom (2 interviewees), interviewed at Talbiyeh camp, Amman, Jordan (December 2021). In Arabic. Translated to English by the author.

N. Kafif and his friend (2 interviewees), interview at Baqa'a camp, Balqa, Jordan (January 2022). In Arabic. Translated to English by the author.

H. hajeh, interviewed at Baqa'a camp, Balqa, Jordan (January 2022). In Arabic. Translated to English by the author.

H. hanafi and his wife (2 interviewees), interviewed at Baqa'a camp, Balqa, Jordan (January 2022). In Arabic. Translated to English by the author.

Bedouin elderly from Niqab desert in Palestine (aged 101), interviewed at Baqa'a camp, Balqa, Jordan (January 2022). In Arabic. Translated to English by the author.

Notes

[1] While he does not talk about the case studies discussed in this thesis, he draws from the experience of other refugee and concentration camps in the twentieth century.

[2] "Naksa" is an Arabic term that means "setback." This day commemorates the events that took place in the aftermath of the Arab-Israeli war, which resulted in the loss of territories for Arab countries (Jordan, Egypt, and Syria). Israel occupied the West Bank, Gaza Strip, Sinai Peninsula, and Golan Heights as a result of this conflict

[3] UNRWA CIP Guidelines were provided by UNRWA headquarters in Jordan through personal communication. This is an unpublished document and can be provided upon official request.

[4] The UNHCR Planning Minimum Emergency Standards is one of several emergency handbooks provided by the UNHCR and is available online.

[5] See the following for further details: Hanafi, S., Hilal, L., & Takkenberg, L. (2014). From chaos to order and back: the construction of UNRWA shelters and camps, 1950–1970 KJERSTI GRAVELSÆTER BERG. In *UNRWA and Palestinian Refugees* (pp. 123-142). Routledge.

[6] Black September refers to a civil war that took place in September 1970 in Jordan between the Jordanian army and the PLO fighters. By its end, Jordanian forces emerged victorious, resulting in the expulsion of the PLO from Jordan. This confrontation left a lasting imprint on the political landscapes of both Palestinians and Jordanians, triggering shifts in power dynamics and the realignment of Palestinian factions.

[7] Medium Term Plan is a planning framework developed by UNRWA that revolves around four adaptable objectives: 1. Meeting host state standards 2. Enhance the economic potential of refugees 3. Maximize capacity building within UNRWA 4. Meeting requirements for the most in need of refugees.
Retrieved July, 12, 2023 from https://www.unrwa.org/userfiles/2010011812234.pdf

[8] Special Hardship Cases (SHC) is an UNRWA program to assist Palestinian refugees who find themselves in highly precarious situations, grappling with various hardships including severe medical conditions, disabilities, or significant social and economic difficulties. The overarching goal of Special Hardship Cases (SHCs) is to extend further support and services to those who are most vulnerable and whose circumstances surpass the coverage of regular assistance programs offered by the United Nations Relief and Works Agency (UNRWA). Aid from this program includes "food, blankets, clothing, small amounts of cash aid, cash grants for self-support projects, help in the repair or reconstruction of shelters and preferential access to UNRWA vocational and teacher training programmes" (UNRWA, 1988, p. 25).

[9] Intifada is an Arabic term meaning "shaking off." It signifies an "uprising" or revolts that have unfolded within the Palestinian territories, predominantly encompassing the West Bank and Gaza Strip, involving acts of resistance against Israeli occupation. Throughout Palestinian history, two prominent intifadas have occurred, the first in 1987 and the second in 2000.

[10] Deutsche Welle (DW), a German public state-owned international broadcaster, airs DW News, a worldwide television program covering news from around the globe.

[11] see https://english.wafa.ps/Pages/Details/129545 for more details.

[12] The United Nations General Assembly (UNGA) serves as the primary decision-making body of the organization.

[13] This is a governmental website that provides statistical information, including data on unemployment rates, population figures, and more.

[14] The UNRWA CIP Guidelines were provided by UNRWA headquarters in Jordan through personal communication. This is an unpublished UNRWA document and can be provided upon official request.

[15] For further information about the 13 Palestinian refugee camps in Jordan, refer to the following source listed in the references (Palestinian Refugees in Jordan, n.d.).

[16] *Fidayeen* are the fighters of the Palestinian Liberation organization, which was established in 1964 in response to the Israeli occupation of the Palestinian territories in 1948. The PLO has been historically considered the one and only legitimate representative of the Palestinian people by the Arab League and numerous countries across the globe.

[17] Jordan industrial Estate Company website:
Retrieved [July 2nd, 2022] from https://www.jiec.com/en/industrial_estates/4/.

[18] See https://arteeast.org/quarterly/the-refugee-industrial-complex-the-qiz-in-jordan/ [retrieved June 16th, 2023] for more information.

[19] The Iranian Red Lion and Sun Society is a humanitarian organization in Iran. It acts as the nation's main organization for disaster response, healthcare services, and humanitarian relief and is regarded as the national equivalent of the Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement.

[20] The Palestinian right to return is one of the central aspects of the Palestinian-Israeli conflict that refers to the inherent right of Palestinian refugees and their descendants, who were compelled to leave their homes and lands in historical Palestine due to the conflict, to reclaim their original homes and properties. This right is rooted in the United Nations General Assembly Resolution 194, and is also affirmed in Article 13 of the Universal Declaration of Human rights.

[21] The Irantian grant refers to assistance provided by the Red Lion and Sun Society of Iran in constructing Talbiyeh, a Palestinian camp in Jordan.

[22] *Nakba* is an Arabic term that means "catastrophe" and refers to the events surrounding the establishment of the State of Israel in 1948 that resulted in the displacement of hundreds of thousands of Palestinians from their homes and land to the neighboring countries.

[23] For more details see: https://www.arch2o.com/architecture-for-humanity/#:~:text=%E2%80%9CIt%20angers%20me%20when%20sustainability,Founder%20of%20Architecture%20for%20Humanity

[24] For more information see Weber, H. (2017). Politics of 'leaving no one behind': contesting the 2030 Sustainable Development Goals agenda. *Globalizations*, *14*(3), 399-414.

[25] USA for UNHCR is a non-profit organization based in the United States that provides support to the work of UNHCR. Their mission is to raise funds and provide assistance to programs that serve refugees, helping to meet their critical needs.

[26] Check the following reference for further details: Yiftachel, O. (2009). Theoretical notes ongray cities': The coming of urban apartheid?. *Planning theory*, *8*(1), 88-100.

[27] Islamic architecture is influenced by Islamic teachings and values (e.g., equity, privacy, respect, modesty, connectivity, adaptability, aesthetic appreciation) as argued by Alqub (2016).

[28]For more details see Rivlin, L. G., & Moore, J. (2001). Home-making: Supports and barriers to the process of home. *Journal of Social Distress and the Homeless*, *10*, 323-336.

[29] The Iranian Red Lion and Sun Society, established in 1922 and was one of the international societies that funded the construction of the Palestinian refugee camps, and more particularly, the construction of Talbiyeh camp.

[30] This refers to the style of architecture influenced by the universal movement of modernism. This style shares unified qualitites such as modularity, mass production, etc.