UNIVERSITY OF BERGAMO

School of Doctoral Studies

Doctoral Degree in INTERCULTURAL HUMANISTIC STUDIES

XXXI Cycle

SSD: M-DEA/01 *Social Anthropology*

"WHO DOES NOT KNOW HOW TO GO BACK HOME?"

Overlapping spatio-temporalities of exile in Lebanon's Palestinian camps

Advisors

Chiar.mo Prof. Daniel Meier

Chiar.ma Prof.ssa Paola Gandolfi

.

Doctoral Thesis

Stefano FOGLIATA

1026316

Academic year 2015/16

Table of Contents

List of Figures

List of Maps

Transliteration and Terms Used

Most Arabic words have been transliterated using the International Journal of Middle East Studies (IJMES) transliteration system, often adopting the simplified version of the transliteration. Transliterated words are italicised on first appearance only. Individual names, including those of public figures, followed either the person's own spelling when using the Latin alphabet or the way English language media outlets spelled them. Names of localities and political groups are spelled using the English version of the name where available. Bourj el-Barajneh is transliterated in the French version.

As a way of preserving the anonymity of research participants, real names have been withheld by mutual agreement. However, where individual occupies a key position which would enable deduction of their real identity, I have used their real names having been given full permission.

Introduction

First of all, you should deeply engage in football
because it keeps you far from bad habits so spread here in the camp.
Moreover, Playing sport shows your strength:
There are people fighting with guns,
You do it through football.
We are all fighting for Palestine in several ways.[1]

Sheikh Mohammed, the responsible of the local Al-Furkan Mosque in Bourj el-Barajneh camp welcomes the group just few seconds before the minarets announce the breaking of the fast at the end of a warm and sticky Ramadan day in Beirut. Monday 12th June 2017: around fifty young men have gathered inside one of the few open-air spaces in the camp: "The Generations of Return football field" (Al-Malʿab Ajyāl al-ʿAwda). Most of the players are children belonging to the local football academy based in the same football field. Fifteen seats are reserved to the first team of Al-Aqsa Club: Palestinian, Syrian and Lebanese young men among the most skilled football players in the camp.

Despite a spread fatigue after a long day of fast, the atmosphere around the tables looks like quite exciting. Or at least this is how I have been living that moment, even if I was among the few persons who did not use to fast. Just few hours before, during the inaugural match of the Palestinian Ramadan League, I had scored the first (and last) two goals of my experience with Al-Aqsa after more than one year of participation in the club. Indeed, I used to assist at most of the matches from the bench and rarely enter the field just few minutes before the end of the match. At the beginning of the football season, the coach considered my approach as too soft for the "heavy" standards of the Palestinian league: "Forget about football in Europe. Here both the field and the players require no fear[2]".

[1] Sheikh Mohamed (June 2017, 12). Public discourse held inside the football field of Bourj el-Barajneh camp. All names are pseudonyms to protect confidentiality and anonymity; real names have been withheld by mutual agreement.
[2] Coach Saleh (September 2016, 13). Private dialogue before the match, Sahel Football Field, Beirut.

Moreover, most of my teammates are technically and physically more equipped than me. In fact, Al-Aqsa Team currently gathers the most talented Palestinian players around Beirut. Moreover, five guys coming from Syria – both Syrian nationals and Palestinians from Syria- have recently joined the team since 2014: their arrival had further improved the average skills and raised the competition among the players within the team. For instance Yazan, a Palestinian on his thirties coming from Yarmouk Camp[3], used to play as a professional striker in Syria before being forced to leave Syria in 2011.

During the match mentioned above, I had the chance to play around twenty minutes and score two goals versus "Al-Fariq al-Lajiʿ in" ("The Refugees Team") after replacing Maher Sabra on the field. While his name does not probably evoke any kind of sportive connections out of the national sportive scene, Maher Sabra is a well-known left-wing backward playing for Nejmeh, the most famous and supported football team in Lebanon. Maher Sabra is also a regular player of the Lebanese National Team who has recently qualified for the 2019 Asian Cup in the Arab United Emirates. Why is a famous Lebanese football player wearing the colours of a Palestinian team based inside a refugee camp? It was due to the crossings with numerous unexpected situations and biographies that the football arena in Lebanon gradually turned into a privileged observation point throughout my fieldwork. First as a player and just later on as a researcher.

When I almost accidently joined with Al-Aqsa Team at the beginning of 2016, my expectations were univocally related to the leisure dimension. In September 2015 I had been granted the opportunity to get a Ph.D. scholarship through a research proposal aimed at working on a multi-sited ethnography of Palestinian refugees of Syria who had recently left their "original host-country" and resettled between Lebanon, Jordan and Northern Europe. The research was designed as a socio-anthropological investigation of the reformulation of imaginaries and trajectories occurring during forced migrations in the aftermath of a further migration beyond the Syrian borders. Focusing on the living experiences and memories of Palestinian refugees from Syria to Lebanon, I wanted to

[3] Located 8km from the centre of Damascus, Yarmouk camp hosted not less than 150.000 Palestinians before the war: its collapse has become the worldwide emblem of the Palestinian tragedy in Syria.

inquire how the previous experience of displacement conditions refugees' daily life inside the previously established Palestinian camps.

Refugee camps currently constitute crucial components of the current landscape in the Middle East (Dalal, 2017). Since the extension of the on-going conflict out of the national borders, the tragedy of the Syrian war has been prevalently visually conveyed through images of people living inside precarious tent settlements. The recent establishment of the United Nations Al Zaatari refugee camp in Jordan, home to about 85.000 people and located some 15 kilometres from the Syrian border, constitutes one of the recent but proper example of such landscape. Most of the actors involved in migration issues tend to conceptualize a clear spatial opposition between so-called national spaces and refugee camps labelled as everyday lived space of the displaced people. Inside these sites a distinctive architecture emerges that starts as a practical aid landscape but is unavoidably inhabited by peoples' routines, strategies and actions over time that contest, alter and change these initial bureaucratic spaces into lived spaces (Jansen, 2016).

Even with the recent establishment of numerous refugee camps around Jordan, Turkey and Iraq, the great majority of the refugees from Syria resettled in the region have been currently residing in urban settings. According to UNHCR, the vast majority of Syrian refugees in the neighbouring countries live in urban areas, with around only 8 per cent accommodated in refugee camps[4]. While most research and public opinion in Lebanon focused on the precariousness of Syria's refugees inside the numerous informal tent settlements around the rural areas in the border regions of Akkar in the north Beka'a in the east, most of Syria's refugees do not currently live in the camps, but settle together with the other "local" populations. Trapped into a general socio-economic precariousness, refugees have been mostly settling around the suburbs or peri-urban areas of the larger cities in the country.

[4] For more info and data, visit http://www.unhcr.org/syria-emergency.html

[5] Such data were confirmed by several informal sources such as the Camp Committer, a local Palestinian NGO and an international one operating inside the camp.

Referring to the quasi-permanent refugee camps located in many embattled parts of the words, Appadurai underlines how "the production of locality faces the related problems of displaced and deterritorialized populations, of state policies that restrict neighbourhoods as context producers, and of local subjects who cannot be anything other than national citizens" (Appadurai, 1996: 193). In Beirut, refugees secured shelters through the heavily segmented urban housing markets that channelled the low-income among them to the city's informal settlements (Fawaz, 2016). In most cases, such neighbourhoods on the margins of the Lebanese major cities (Tripoli, Beirut, Saida and Tyre) correspond to the localities where most of the refugee camps were built in 1948 in order to accommodate the people who had reached the country in the aftermath of the Palestinian exodus.

As "extraterritorial spaces" out of the Lebanese legislation and interference where Palestinian factions have the control of the internal dynamics of the camps, Palestinian camps have historically worked as safe havens for thousands of undocumented migrants and currently host numerous refugees from Syria. While still acting internally as independent spaces within Lebanon and nonetheless been physically and psychologically besieged (Qasmiyeh and Qasmiyeh, 2013), Palestinian camps are not disconnected from the urban fabric of the national territory and the urban dynamics of the surrounding cities. During the last decades, most of the Palestinian refugee camps and the neighbouring areas have moved spatially closer due to a synchronic urbanization processes.

Numerous researchers explored the nexus between socio-economic dimensions intertwined with the blurring boundaries between camp and urban spaces within the national territoty (Agier, 2008; Chatty, 2010; Latif, 2008; Sanyal 2010). Although migration control is frequently heralded as falling within the domestic jurisdiction of States, human mobility across border is a permanent feature of history that has been framed by international law for ages (Chetail, 2016: 901). Throughout the enduring dialectic between sovereignty and hospitality, the Nation-State still functions as the distributor and guarantor of the access within its delimitating borders. In this sense, territorial strategies of ordering, bordering and "othering" often take place, although certainly not necessarily, at the spatial scale of States (Van Houtum & Van Naerssen, 2001: 126). Even if in the form of deregulated national borders, national borders

constitute a matter of exclusion towards the subjects without territory (Sassen, 2013).

For refugees, statelessness imbues everyday life and identity with a sense of absence and vulnerability. Forced population movements have extraordinarily diverse historical and political causes and involve people who, while all displaced, find themselves in qualitatively different situations and predicaments (Mallki, 1995). In most of the cases, the individual who is stateless becomes a non-person, "a body that can be moved around by armies and police, customs officers and refugee agencies" (Benhabib, 2008; 175). If the state border is the first boundary to be crossed by international migrants, it is declined thereafter—in the places of settlement and/or transit—on various scales and in several spheres: community, cultural and legal (Dorai, 2014: 122). The "ecology of hospitality" (Butler, 2012) is an exclusive prerogative of local household, municipalities and any kind of other social arenas that are considered as integral part of the State environment. In this sense, Palestinian camps in Lebanon are unavoidably currently involved in the "ecology of hospitality".

While being spatially integrated into most of the urban plans, Palestinian camps have been analysed as merely physically and psychologically besieged areas. Within such spaces, refugees have tended to be conceptualized in political reified terms – as victims, symbols, or bargaining chips in interminable peace negotiations (Allan, 2014) and framed in ideological terms through the nationalistic prisms of memory and return. Scholarship has tended to uncritically consider refugees as national subjects and to neglect forms of social and political organization and identification that they have developed in exile (Allan, 2014; 5). In this sense, such narratives have been dominant at the expense of more dynamic and diverse forms of negotiation the everyday commitment to the refugee camp.

While most research has investigated the forms of commitment and belonging between the national homeland and the current place of residence, Palestinian refugees experience and reconstitute diverse transnational discourses and practices across different so-called 'host states'. Labelled for decades as univocally marginalized "spaces of exception" (Agamben, 2003), recent literature has rather recently focused on investigating how Palestinians in Lebanon reinterpret their long-term commitments to the camps. Recent works have described how Palestinians transcend the link between

the host state and the homeland, extending to a plurality of spaces outside of the binary, with 'home-camps' turning into spaces of belonging and longing even after refugees have relocated elsewhere (Gabiam and Fiddian Qasmiyeh, 2016; also see Fiddian-Qasmiyeh, 2011).

Inspired by research focusing on potentials of locality in elucidating transnational phenomena and dynamics (Levitt, 2003), I approached how Palestinian camps in Lebanon turn into meaningful micro-territorial units overlapping with national state intensity of its meaningful presence in a continuous body of "bounded territory" (Balibar, 1990). My research situates along part of the recent literature that aims to analytically de-exceptionalize the narrative about Palestinian camps in Lebanon through the subjective perspective of people inhabiting them on a daily basis (Woroniecka-Krzyzanowska, 2017). I tried to show how a critical approach toward certain post-humanitarian accounts of the Palestinian experience in exile could generate a more nuanced understanding of refugees' everyday life (Achilli, 2015). Then, my research will depict how the arrival of "newly displaced" people from Syria within the already overcrowded Palestinian camps further complicates and questions the definition of a refugee camp far beyond being an extraterritorial space of exception inhabited by living trajectories of "bare life" (Agamben, 1995).

While looking at the current social compositions of a Palestinian camp in Lebanon, we rapidly realize that a mere focus on a specific part of its populations without taking into considerations the social environment risks conducting into a reading of the fieldwork towards a slippery direction. In this sense, Appadurai (1986: 357) warns against the use of the so-called gate-keeping concepts in anthropological theory, that seem to limit anthropological theorizing about the place in question, and that define the quintessential and dominant questions of interests in the region. Along this perspective, Palestinian camps in Lebanon emerge as privileged spaces in order to (re)conduct the research towards an interactionist perspective whose subjects are mostly refugees from multifaceted national, historical and geographical trajectories of displacement.

In the atmosphere of displacement and camp life, the relationship between place and identity risk being regarded as mutually constitutive, where the construction of identity involves establishing opposites and "others" whose actuality is always subject to the continuous interpretation and reinterpretation of their differences (Said, 1994). Olwig and Hastrup (1997) explained to which extent culture is not necessarily tied to particular places, but is rather created at the interstices between people in their interaction with one another in everyday discourses that may be localised, but also in the everyday experience and actions of extraordinary events such as forced migration and exile. Among others, Peteet (2005) investigated Palestinians' political sense of place through culturally grounded practices of daily living aimed at imposing their social organization and cultural maps inside the camps. In this sense, throughout my ethnographic research, I was inspired by Abou Lughoud's stance (1991) on the need to write "ethnographies of the particular" in order to unsettle the culture concept and subvert the process of "othering" it entails. It is by merging the "exceptionality" of exiles with the "normality" of everyday experiences of belonging to a place that we can introduce the decisive element of space and people inhabiting it.

With the recent arrival of numerous newly displaced people from Syria, the already-overcrowded Palestinian camps in Lebanon have once more turned into new spaces of encampment (Janmyr and Knudsen, 2016). Within the current landscape of "overlapping displacements" (Fiddian-Qasmiyeh, 2012), the interactions between Palestinians and Syrians on the Lebanese territory are spatially materialized through the new geographies and mental configurations of the camps. In this situation, the social relations with the "other refugees" deeply intertwine with the peculiar daily practices of mobility that implicate exteriority and co-presence (Dorai and Puig, 2012).

In this context, the daily refugee-refugee relations (Fiddian-Qasmiyeh, 2016) between Palestinian and Syrian refugees inside Lebanon's refugee camps constitute new spaces of recognition (Carpi, 2016) in respect with the institutionalized paradigm of hospitality as univocally operated or mediated by the State institutions. The case of previously established Palestinian refugee camps as *de facto* "extraterritorial" spaces further complicates the current "refugee-scape" (Papataxiarchis, 2016). To which extent

can we consider a refugee community as a host community instead of embodying the traditional dress of the guests? We will be looking at the daily interactions between different spatio-temporalities and narratives of exile inside an overcrowded and contentious space such as a Palestinian refuge camp established around 70 years before.

Inspired by the works cited above, my research investigates how the recent arrival of newly displaced communities into spaces inhabited by and labelled for decades as "long-term refugees" sheds an alternative perspective on the morphology and the socio-spatial dynamics of Palestinian camps in Lebanon. The guiding question of my research is: how are socio-spatial relations altered with new groups of people entering and settling inside a peculiar location such as a previously established refugee camp? Space here becomes "an assemblage of spatial uses, practices, and representations involved in the production and reproduction of social structures, social action, and relations of power and resistance" (Gotham, 2003: 724). Throughout my research, the analytical observation of the distinct spatial dimensions materialized inside the camps allowed me to observe in depth how space conditions the social relations that emerge among the "historical" Palestinian and the "newly" displaced Syrian refugees.

Along his research on the definition of the urban poor as spatial actors, Watson (2018) highlighted the potential of new forms of community and social organising that use urban space as a policy and political resource. From different perspectives and disciplines, numerous anthropologists and political geographies have recently investigated how marginalised subjects claim their rights in and through space through counter-conducts that subvert the host's control and seize the camp space, repurposing and reforming it (Bulley, 2016; Maestri & Hughes, 2017). Infused with cultural meaning, mobility entails much more than mere movement (Frello, 2008) and is strictly connected with particular crossing of established spatial-cultural boundaries. While motion and spatial mobility were generally seen as antipathetic to traditional anthropology (Augé, 1995), more recent works fruitfully contributed to this field of inquiry "by ethnographically detailing how mobility is a contested ideological construct involving much more than mere movement but is culturally embedded, manifested in metacultural discourses and imaginaries" (Salazar, 2010: 54).

Focusing on Palestinian camps in Lebanon, Ramadan (2013) underlined how the camp is much more than an anonymous terrain of conflict or a tool of international agencies, and understanding its spatiality is essential for seeing the everyday politics and material practices of refugees. In this sense, the camps' spatiality and its relation with the outside are currently reshaped by the presence of newly displaced people from Syria. The spatial organization of bodies imposed by the national authorities inside and around the camps intertwines with the legal status of refugees and their socio-spatial organization in Lebanon. The research will describe how an already established Palestinian refugee camp materializes into a strategically social and cultural resource for the newly displaced refugees in Lebanon. I will observe in depth to which extent Palestinian and Syrian refugees reimagine and reformulate their own presence in the camp through deliberate practices of performance and representation. How do daily practices in locality effectively contest international gaps in protection, national securitization policies and arbitrary measures by non-local state actors? Distancing from exceptionalist frameworks, my fieldwork has expounded on how current narratives and practices of overlapping displacements reproduce an imaginary of refugee camps as what I attempt to define in terms of "elusive sites of contestation".

With the settling of numerous Syria's refugees inside their perimeter, Palestinian camps stand in a further equivocal position as regards their collocation within the humanitarian debate on the spatiality of refuge. While the newly established refugee camps in the region for Syrian refugees are relegated out of the urban landscape, Palestinian camps find themselves currently located inside the urban landscapes of the major cities. Even once Palestinian camps were established in the region on the aftermath of the 1948-*Nakba*, their architecture and geography were mostly designed in rural areas to host just a few hundred of people for a very limited period of time (Abreek-Zubiedat, 2015). In this way, my work will show how Palestinian and Syrian camps metaphorically engage in a sort of diachronic process of progressive architectural evolution and demographic expansion that evokes the temporalities and the entanglements of the two national exiles.

For instance, Bourj el-Barajneh camp – where I focused my research- was established in 1948 by the League of the Red Cross Societies to accommodate Palestine refugees forced to flee from five villages in the northern historical Palestine (Gorokhoff, 1984). Planned to host few hundreds of refugees on the land of a small village on Beirut southern outskirts, the camp underwent several transformations mainly related to the contingent political situations. Just recently, similarly to other Palestinian camps in Lebanon, the camp has been currently providing refuge to a huge number of refugees from Syria: circa 20.000 Palestinians and a similar number of newcomers from Syria currently reside within the perimeter of the camp[5]. How do these narratives of exiles dialectically interact and inspire practices of mutual understanding and recognisability in a country with the highest per capita refugee- hosting country in the world?

Especially inside spaces charged with political and historical significances such as a Palestinian camp in Lebanon, Palestinian and Syrian trajectories and narratives of exile currently overlap and contribute to reframe collective feelings of belonging and contested memories in the region. In this case, time is a crucial factor specially if we reconsidered the role of Syria inside the internal affairs of Lebanon up to its Army intervention during the Lebanese Civil War and its consequent occupation of the territory until 2005 (Dionigi, 2016).

In 1985 Bourj el-Barajneh camp was literally sieged by Amal military factions for more than six months, with the support of the Syrian Army that controlled the entries to the camp (Siklawi, 2012). In this regards, the active role of the Syrian Army in besieging camps such as Bourj el-Barajneh during the War of Camps (1985-87) have constantly constituted a reminder and an unavoidable key point in order to reframe the coexistence of "local" and newly refugees in such a space. For instance, during an informal talk out of the football field in the camp, Abou Mahmoud, who was a fighter with several Palestinian groups inside Bourj el-Barajneh camp, recalls:

The siege was very hard: we were not even able to go out and get some food. At a certain point we were running out of powdered milk for babies: the situation was dramatic indeed. Therefore, we decided to simulate a huge accident within the camp to

[5] Such data were confirmed by several informal sources such as the Camp Committer, a local Palestinian NGO and an international one operating inside the camp.

open the way for the entrance of an ambulance that had been loaded with milk, oil and other necessary stuff. The ambulance was, instead, stopped at the camp checkpoint on the Airport Road and our comrades on the ambulance were killed by the Syrian soldiers. We know that these people do not have anything to do with the Army, but how can we forget?[6]*"*

Looking back at old times, one of his old friends argued: "Syrians came in the camp and little by little have been occupying all the available spaces. They do not even know what means rebuilding their own life in their own camp[7]".

Memories, returns, socio-economic predominance become all areas of contention along two different temporalities and modalities of displacements that find themselves forced to share the same space. What are for instance the socio-political implications behind the reformulation of the imaginary projected towards the Syrian citizen from the one of "occupier" to the "refugee" in a relatively limited range of years? Along several dimensions, Syrian and Palestinian questions appear deeply intertwined (Dot Pouillard, 2013). As such, the different temporalities of exile imply an on-going process of interactions and confrontations between the newcomers and the protracted generations of Palestine's refugees. My ethnography will expound on how Palestinian and Syrian refugees "share" their daily practices by reorganizing and reshaping spaces, timings and functionalities by mobilizing the resources available inside a Palestinian refugee camp.

The research is largely based on two years of fieldwork (2016-2017) during which I mostly lived between central Beirut and Bourj el-Barajneh camp, located in the southern suburbs of Lebanese capital. Just after several months of preliminary work carried out here and in other areas and refugee camps in Lebanon at the end of 2015, I decided to focus my fieldwork on a single camp, in order to observe more in depth everyday practices and contingencies in a given context. Contextually, my previous experiences in the Palestinian camps had revealed me the urgency to further reconsider

[6] Abou Mahmoud (April 2017, 10). Personal interview, Bourj el-Barajneh camp
[7] Abou Khaled (April 2017, 10). Personal interview, Bourj el-Barajneh camp

throughout my research the issue of production of knowledge in refugee studies, and to which extent refugees can be constructed as "speechless emissaries," or objects of aid who are repeatedly denied voice and agency (Malkki, 1996).

When I arrived in Lebanon for the first time in February 2014, my pursuits combined some consultancy jobs for an Italian NGO and the finalization of the writing of my Master Thesis. As per the former, I was assigned to monitor an international project aimed at "facilitating the coexistence of Lebanese, Palestinian and Syrian families" inside the Palestinian camp of Dbayeh, one of the smallest Palestinian camps in the region located on the coast around 10 kilometres north of Beirut. Planned to host few hundreds of Palestinian Christian families, the camp has increased in population with the settling of numerous Lebanese families and the recent arrival of around 600 persons from Syria.

Meanwhile, my work for the Master focused on the peculiar discriminatory procedures endured by Palestinians fleeing Syria to Lebanon. The daily relations with Dbayeh's residents represented a preliminary lens of observation, a sort of microcosm to keep in mind throughout my successive researches inside the other Palestinian camps in Lebanon. What was evident in Dbayeh is the different scale of securitisation in respect with the other camps. There is almost no security control at the edge of the camp, if not for an Army checkpoint barely active during the last years. In terms of access, it implies relative easy accessibility at any moment of the day. If we exclude Mar Elias camp in central Beirut, such a picture does not really coincide with the landscape of the other ten Palestinian camps in Lebanon.

Indeed, in some Palestinian camps in Lebanon such as Nahr el-Bared and Ein el-Hilweh, foreigners who are not employed in the humanitarian sector can enter the camp only with permission from the Lebanese authorities, which is rarely granted. In this sense, my part-time occupation in the humanitarian sector facilitated the networking with several iNGOs and UN Agencies that work inside the camps and allowed me to regularly visit camps such as Nahr el-Bared in the north, Ein el-Hilweh around Saida and Buss Camp in Tyre.

However, I rapidly realized how these operative needs reproduced modalities of engagement that dominated most of the past research about Palestinian camps in

Lebanon. My fieldwork was unavoidably filtered through the overwhelming presence of NGOs (Hanafi and Tabar, 2006) and other networks that usually deal with foreign researchers (Nayel, 2013). Just during the last two decades some scholars have wondered on how NGOs and other agencies arrogated the right of speaking on the behalf of refugees, who are described as divided, lost and neglected persons (Hanafi & Long, 2010). This humanitarian narrative is particularly pervading within not easily accessible spaces such as refugee camps, where NGO employees are among the few international persons who are freely allowed to move inside the camp.

For instance, between 2014 and 2016 I was provided the chance to enter Nahr el-Bared camp just in three occasions[8]. In all these cases the Lebanese Army gave me the permit to visit the camp through the intermediation of three different organizations: two NGOs and one UN Agency I had previously contacted through official channel. However, in front of my request to talk with some families who resided in a particular area where most of the Palestinian families from Syria were resettled, all the three organizations introduced to me the same two families. In this case, the spread feelings of mistrust between most refugees and NGOs were skipped through a sort with "affiliation" with several families. In this sense, aid distribution turns into a unidirectional system of power and a penetrating system through refugees' daily life (Issa; 2017). Not surprisingly, according to the official version repeated by three different intermediates, these families were chosen "among the most vulnerable ones in the camp".

In most cases, such people, voided of any kind of agency and subjectivity, tend to represent the "prototype" of refugees whom international networks and researches expected to meet during a one-shot visit. In this way, my contemporary experiences as both humanitarian worker and early-stage researcher revealed decisive to show the inconsistencies of such an approach where refugees turn into merely "objects of display" (Rajaram, 2002). In this sense, these episodes significantly exemplified how most research is filtered through humanitarian actors and partially explain why especially the same narratives inside certain camps result over researched during the last decades.

[8] While the first visit was justified by my work duties, in the two successive episodes my request had to do with research interests.

Similar episodes like the one happened in Nahr el-Bared have repeated several times between Nahr el-Bared, Beddawi, al-Buss and Shatila. Among the others, Shatila camp is one of the most heavily researched communities worldwide (Sukkarieh & Tanock, 2012). In this regards, over-research has implications on the persons "studied" who might experience being "objectified" by researchers. Along this perspective, the risk concerns reproducing the discrepancy within writing into a Western power/knowledge production while aiming to counter colonizing research practices (Heide-Jørgensen, 2014).

How and not why do we study camp? What is the epistemological difference between living and visiting a camp? How to shift the research in order to avoid reproducing narratives about over-researched camps? What responsibilities do researchers carry towards the researched community in under-privileged conditions? These methodological interrogatives emerged during a two-day workshop organized in Beirut by the Institute for Palestine Studies (IPS) in May 2016. Held right at the crucial starting phase of my fieldwork, such a debate among local and international researchers (further) conditioned my strategic approach to the fieldwork. I was especially struck about the very few alternative trajectories of research table to challenge traditional roles of researchers in such restricted contexts.

As a foreigner working on an ethnographic project inside such securitised spaces, the main challenges were linked to the accessibility and feasibility of undertaking fieldwork on a daily basis[i]. Unsettled to see how NGOs, solidarity networks and UN Agencies pervade the narrative of refugee camps as univocally space of governamentality (Foucault, 1978), I had conveyed to frame the fieldwork as not be filtered by such intermediaries. Far beyond the specificity of Palestinian camps in Lebanon, I was inspired by research hinged to show how humanitarian spaces such as refugee camps have often been reshaped and influenced by humanitarian interventions, democracy-promotion programs and developmental projects (Fassin, 2011; Bornstein & Redfield, 2010).

The dominant Palestinian and humanitarian organizations' imaginary discourses has historically provided researchers with an informative and relational potential that

throughout my fieldwork needed to be replaced through an alternative methodology of research. First of all, the crucial prerogative passed by the possibility to freely communicate without any kind of linguistic intermediates. Beyond the logistic issues of accessibility to the sources in the camps, most of the "popularity" of the humanitarian narratives in the international research is due to the fact that NGOs solve the translation issues between the researcher and the interviewees. Among the others, Ali Nayel (2013), a former translator and fixer for scholars and journalists inside the Palestinian camps in Lebanon, emphasized the qualitative gap between speaking or not the same language of your interviewees in such securitised socio-spatial contexts.

After numerous tricky experiences occurred during my previous fieldwork, I was then committed to exclusively rely on a non-mediated fieldwork carried out almost exclusively in colloquial Levantine Arabic[9]. While the importance of 'learning the language' is usually noted in the literature on ethnographic research, O'Reilly has pointed out how this process could not simply be a matter of learning to communicate in another language, but of identifying subtle differences in dialect, understanding colloquialisms, acquiring slang terminology, and learning when and how to use a polite or a casual tone (2012: 95).

Throughout my fieldwork, the attempt to overcoming linguistic obstacles was not strictly correlated with the removal of numerous logistic obstacles and the access to direct contacts with most of the people inhabiting the camp. Indeed, it also allowed me to freely organize autonomously the spatio-temporal coordinates of my fieldwork. On this way, we should reconsider how timing during the day becomes an unavoidable variable to consider while trying to do research inside Palestinian refugee camps.

[9] A recent study by Abou Taha examined how Palestinians in Lebanon identify themselves, their attitudes towards their language, both Modern Standard Arabic (MSA) and the Palestinian Colloquial Arabic (PCA), as an expression of their identity and cultural heritage, and the factors that affect their self-identification, language use and pride in their dialect. Abou Taha, Y.A.M. (2016). "We have been here for 67 years: a study of Palestinians' perceptions of their national identity and attitudes towards their language in Lebanon". Master Thesis. American University of Beirut, Department of English. (Unpublished, Courtesy of the author).

Indeed, most of the humanitarian organizations whose offices are active inside the camps are usually active during a daily schedule on the scheme of traditional office timetable.

In this sense, their narrative of camps and its dwellers are almost exclusively grounded on a daily light temporality that goes from early morning to afternoon. No space is left for the daily life of the camp out of these contingencies. However, life in the camp- such as in any other social context, is not over once comes the night. If our perceptions of refugees' experiences of displacement were based on photographs produced and disseminated by the UN, NGOs and the media, we could be forgiven for assuming that refugees' daytimes are either seemingly eternal or that night-time merely exists for sleeping (Fiddian-Qasmiyeh, 2017).

This is why most visitors, journalists, photographers and even researchers leave refugee camps before the sunset and just captures refugees' day-time practices in a selective way (Vogler, 2006). In this way, this selectivity is functional to the univocal "humanitarian narrative": once NGOs and other associations close their door around 5 pm, life in the camp does not deserve to be visible out of these spaces. Indeed, the scarcity of available sources (both written and visual) about refugee camps at dark – if not in case of episodes of violence spread at night- aroused my concerns.

On contrary, a quick visit inside a camp such as Bourj el-Barajneh would be enough to perceive how the social animosity inside the narrow streets of the camp becomes lively once people end their daily duties. In this sense, the variegated landscape of leisure time inside a refugee camp is a component of a daily life that is very often absent in research if not once it is mediated- once more- by some humanitarian projects implemented by iNGOs or local associations. This absence drove me to move closer to the Bourj el-Barajneh and start visiting the camp everyday, especially once the dark pervades the narrow streets of the camp. After quitting my consultancy jobs at the end of 2015 in order to fully focus on my doctoral research, I felt the urgency to overcome the "humanitarian filter" in articulating and sustaining the traditional narrative of camps, often at the expense of more dynamic everyday practices of coexistence that were emerging inside the camps between Palestine's and Syria's refugees.

The research has shifted in focus from ethno-national specific segments of populations to the biographies, trajectories and narratives of people who re-shape the geography of a refugee camp by dwelling and living it everyday, night-time and daylight. I have tried to counter such methodological complexities by a critical use of multiplicity of methods aiming at intersubjective authorship through reflexive methodologies and ethnographic participant-observations. Dealing with a peculiar spatio-temporal contingency of forced migration, my research combines theoretical and methodological approaches of anthropology with a socio-historical perspective and the contribution of urban and border studies to investigate the complex social interactions emerging in the context of refugee-refugee relations inside Palestinian camps.

I opted for focusing my research inside Bourj el-Barajneh camp since it combines relatively easy accessibility together with a strategic and significant spatial dimension in terms of interconnectivities with its neighbouring areas. As concerns the physical extension of Bourj el-Barajneh camp, the camp's boundaries - with the exception of the southern area confining with the poor Shia neighbourhood of al-Raml - are clearly demarcated by a road system that separates it from the surrounding Shi'a dominated neighbourhoods known as *al-Dahiya* (Habib, 2012). All the main roads thus constitute a fundamental way to the city for the camp inhabitants. The historically relatively high levels of mobility between the camp and outside have been partially eased by the absence of permanent strict checkpoints: although the main entrances are presided over by Lebanese Army's barracks, controls over human mobility are less strict than in the cases of other camps.

Combining my previous experiences in the camps together with the ability to deal in the colloquial Arabic and a instinctive passion and interest in football, during the first months of 2016 I began engaging with several people gathering in the only football pitch inside Bourj el-Barajneh camp. After playing for several months with tens of young Palestinian and Syrian young men informally gathering at the pitch, I significantly deepened my presence and connections in the camp by becoming part of two football teams regularly playing in the camp. The first one, Al Aqsa Team, is composed of about 20 players who gather four times per week and compete for the

Refugees' League of Beirut. Inside the camp, Al Aqsa Team is frequently associated with the political faction of Hamas[10], that has invested a lot of resources in promoting sport associations as very powerful setting for grassroots affiliation and visibility (Jensen, 2009). The second team – linked to Al-Aqsa management but more informal and gathering just once per week for training - mostly includes mainly Palestinians from Syria who - because of their common origin - renamed the team as *Fariq al-Yarmouk* (Yarmouk Team).

Al Aqsa Team takes part in several competitions throughout the year: the Refugees' League of Beirut, the Palestinian Federation League and the Ramadan League. Last year, it was the runner up in the Yasser Arafat Cup, one of the most important events as regards the Palestinian sport in Lebanon. Around the Beirut football arena, Al-Aqsa is currently recognized as one of the most prestigious football teams. Also due to the presence of Syrian players recently arrived in Lebanon, its popularity transcends the ethno-national Palestinian dimension and contributes to question the social marginalization often given from granted while dealing about Palestinian refugees in Lebanon.

While in both of the teams I was given a warm welcome, some of my teammates were naturally distrustful of my presence in the club as a privileged westerner playing inside a Palestinian team. Nassar for instance kept on asking me throughout the first year: "What is an Italian doing here in such a refugee camp?" On the other hand, Ehab, who was the first person I have known from the club: "When I saw you for the first time here on the field, I thought that I would have loved to have an Italian guy playing for us. Moreover, after noticing you were quite talented for football, I proposed the management to include you in the official roster of the club[11]".

During my fieldwork, while trying to win the trust of my new fellow players and coaches, the football sphere showed itself decisive to facilitate my access to informants while at the same time overcoming relational, linguistic and logistic obstacles materialized during the first meetings with the team (Rookwood, 2010). In this situation, football was not conceived as a "modern sport" tied to a system of global

[10] While the dialectic relation between football and politics will be extensively discussed throughout the research, most of the players are not directly engaged with the political faction

[11] Ehab (October 2017, 10). Personal interview, Bourj el-Barajneh camp

institutions, rather as a daily "simple playing of games" (Bourdieu, 1978) linked to the need for creative activity, the imaginary, and play according to the "right to the city" (Lefebvre, 1996). While initially intended as mere moments of fun, the daily participation in the sporting event of the clubs alongside my teammates and other camp dwellers at the pitch have rapidly revealed as crucial throughout my fieldwork, in terms of meaningful point of observation and rare opportunity to share both leisure time and other daily life spheres with the dwellers and therefore get inside their dynamics of mobility and their social relations.

Footballs team such as Al-Aqsa Team are organized around "lived ritual events happening at a specific moment that generate intense moments of bodily co-presence around a specific place" (Urry, 2007: 234). The football field where Al-Aqsa team usually trains inside Bourj el-Barajneh camp is regularly frequented by a number of Syrians and even Lebanese mainly from al-Dahiye who choose to play there due to the cheaper rent. Due to its openness and relatively friendly atmosphere in such an overcrowded camp, this space turned into a reference space for a huge number of people both resident in the camp and around the neighbouring areas.

In respect with tens of cafés and kiosks spread all over the camps, its larger spatial extension together with the "global language" of football are decisive in gathering people with diverse economic, political and social backgrounds. Inside the "Generations of return football field", hundreds of people from different nationalities and temporalities of exile recreate a "daily microcosm" far from the traditional conceptualization of refugee camps and its dwellers and foster their own social connections under the informal landscape of football.

After assiduous trainings, matches and meetings, the "football arena" inside Lebanon's refugee camps had been already inexorably overlapping with my fieldwork. After few months of participation inside Al-Aqsa Team, I decided to look at my team as a microcosm of the daily interactions between different temporalities of exiles that gathered inside a refugee camp where playing football historically constitutes an unavoidable social component. Actually, the activities performed during leisure time often overlaps with the other daily life dimensions, providing resources going far beyond mere leisure spatio-temporalities.

Playing football inside a dynamic of football team turned into the pragmatic anti-reductionist alternative to a narrative around refugee camps mainly structured around nationalistic claims and humanitarian narratives. Some researches underline how sport is increasingly becoming a substantial aspect of the neoliberal policy repertoire of cities aimed at generating social order in disadvantaged inner-city neighbourhoods (Spaaij, 2009: 22). In this sense, the specific organization of the Palestinian football distinguishes itself from the sport- based intervention programs that also serve as a form of social control and regulation for humanitarian or institutional actors.

Shifting analytical attention from narratives mediated by these multiple institutional and humanitarian actors toward the contingencies of everyday experiences inside a football field, I turned attention to the coping strategies of survival emerging between the "local" Palestinian community and the newly displaced refugees from Syria. To examine practices of spatial appropriation, social interaction and production of new meanings of both spaces and relations (but also borders) starting from the margins of the camp and from the marginal aspects of ordinary life such as playing a sport in a team. At a broader level, a deeper understanding of self-organized sport activities turned into an alternative point of observation that slips away from the prevailing directives of institutional governamentality imposed upon refugee camps.

During the first four months of fieldwork inside the football field (January-April 2016), I lived in a shared apartment around Beirut's Museum area, located around 4 kilometres north from the camp. From there, I used to get Bourj el-Barajneh around the early afternoon and go back home once football trainings were over around 11pm. I used to reach Bourj el-Barajneh either by public transportation or by being driven by a teammate also living in Beirut. The rides on Mohammed's scooter were particularly relevant in providing me with a new light about the ambivalence of movement, together with his impressions as a Palestinian living in central Beirut but spending most of his free-time with former schoolmates living in the camp. "I will never be able to live in such a camp" used to tell me Mohammed while entering the narrow streets of Bourj el-Barajneh. Inspired by the discourses of the coach before the matches about feeling of belonging to the team and the camp, Mahmoud positioned himself an "ibn al-fariq" (Son of the team) but not an "Ibn al-mukhayyam" (Son of the camp).

As concerns my positionality within the team, the four initial months spent within the squad had not been enough to be considered a son of the team (*ibn al-fariq),* while my biography, my passport and my place of residence kept me miles away from being considered an *ibn al-mukhayyam* (son of the camp). My freedom to enter and exit were in that case not just related to the possibility of leaving Lebanon at any time, but also due to the limited temporality of my daily presence in the camp due to the my actual residency outside the camp.

Starting from April 2016, I started spending my nights inside the office of the football field in company with Khaled, the night-custodian who was at the same time one of my teammates. Once trainings were over and most of the people left the field, this place used to gather around ten persons among Khaled's friends and relatives who used to enjoy the night watching football matches on TV, drinking coffee and chatting till the sunset. In this case, these relationships nurtures along time with Khaled's friends yielded many resources far beyond the restricted ambience of the camp.

When Khaled's role as guardian was replaced by a structured system of video surveillance, our informal group moved its gatherings in an unrented apartment up to Khaled's family. This almost new apartment was a property of Mahmoud, Khaled's brother, who had moved to Denmark ten years before after marrying with a Danish-Palestinian girl from Copenhagen, but used to come back three months per year in order to renovate his paper as still waiting for an unlimited permit of residence. Therefore, Mahmoud's house became my second house in Lebanon, where I used to spend most of my time especially at nights. While living in Bourj el-Barajneh allowed me at least to experience the ordinary predicaments of staying inside a Palestinian camp in Lebanon, playing inside such space provided me with an alternative analytical perspective of the daily 24 hours of that camp.

My daily presence around football field in the camp was not just made up of individual connections on the football field: in this sense, meetings and gatherings in group were part of the social life of the camp beyond matches or events such as the *Iftar* mentioned before. Right at the end of the dinner, one of the coaches askes the youngest guys among the players: "*Min ma bya'rif kif byirja' a l-bayt*?" (Who does not know how to go back home?). The coach was there referring to the material paths children

usually cross throughout a complicated system of badly enlighten narrow streets. Most of the children were born in Bourj el-Barajneh camp and developed an accurate expertise of the complicated architecture and geography of the camp. Indeed, I have also benefited several times from their knowledge in order not to get lost at each turning point throughout my fieldwork.

On the other hand, most of the children who recently arrived in Lebanon from Syria hardly recognized the way back home. Shadi, who was born in Damascus 11 years before and has been living in Bourj el-Barajneh camp for the last two years told me in that occasion: "I still remember the way from my school and my home in Syria. But do not ask me to drive you anywhere else here in the camp.[12]" In this way, through a banal question such as "Who does not how to go back home?" the coach and the management of the team could easily distinguish the "native Palestinian refugees" from the newly displaced ones from Syria. As a consequence of this "selection", some Palestinian guys were asked by the coaches to drive back home their Syrian teammates.

While approaching the final steps of my doctoral thesis, I have been wondering several times on how this anecdote exemplifies the complex process of reformulation as concerns my personal attitudes and academic approach throughout my fieldwork. As said before, the provisional research was supposed to deal with a precise segment of populations – namely the Palestinian refugees from Syria – and their troubled process of identity reformulation on the move from Syria to Lebanon. Along that perspective, a question like "Who does not how to go back home?" could have been correlated to refugees' collective demand of return to their homeland. Topics that, according to a nationalist narrative, could be perceived as crucial for a collective feeling of national identity when reclaimed by Palestinian refugees after seven decades of exile.

However, the coach's question referred to the narrow streets of a Palestinian camp that children had to cross at night. Something that has to do with a daily routine of going back home after completing the daily duties, automatic motions that people generally perform everyday around the world. In that case, while evoking a return to home, the coach "solely" wanted to assure that children would have safely reached their

[12] Shadi (June 2017, 12). Personal interview, Bourj el-Barajneh camp.

parents' house. As in the case of the children asked about the way back to home, refugee-refugee relations question several contested dimensions of refugee's daily life inside a Palestinian refugee camp. "Life is so much more fluent than academia" told me prof. Ruba Salih after I had exposed her some of my methodological doubts about my work during her visit in the Hamas Football Field.

My research is mainly based on participant-observations, in depth interviews and informal conversations that took place before and after training, while visiting households and participating in daily life activities and on the occasion of games played outside the camp. In this way, my fieldwork necessarily needed to be on the move, observing people's movements while simultaneously conducting ethnographic research. According to this pattern, "the ethnographer first participates in patterns of movement, and then interviews people, individually or in focus groups, as to how their diverse mobilities constitute their patterning of everyday life" (Urry, 2007: 40). With the exception of some interviews held in private spaces with persons with whom I had established a mutual feeling of trust, I rapidly realized how carrying a recorder and taking detailed notes in such securitized public spaces prevented my interviewees from performing a spontaneous flow of speech. Therefore, most of the dialogues inside the Palestinian camps were reconstructed afterwards, knowing that they did not constitute- if not in rare occasions- a corpus of authentic material.

In order to better frame and communicate the constant self-negotiations of my positionality within the fieldwork, I used to refer to a word pun self-adopted in my mother tongue. In fact, the terms "fieldwork", "camp" and "football field" can be translated in Italian with the same word: "campo". Therefore, "a fieldwork inside a football field of a refugee camp" becomes *un lavoro di campo nel campo di un campo profughi*. This word pun somehow reveals my complex shifting in positioning throughout my fieldwork: from a football player just interested in the pleasure of football to a player whose team and teammates turn into the crucial subjects of research. In this regards, carrying out a fieldwork inside an environment where you were mainly considered as a football players much more than a researcher rose several ethical dilemmas that have not been completely resolved even at the end of my fieldwork, but that constitute an unavoidable feature throughout an ethnographic research.

Despite having constantly clarified and confronted about my "double-role" with my teammates and managers, very little changed in terms of relations and reciprocal perceptions. Inside the football field, I was just the player of the team. The predominance of "the player" throughout the past two-year fieldwork was strengthened by the peculiar relationship established inside a football team, where the process of building such a relationship starts from the corporality and the relation of bodies with the space of game and among the same bodies. At least until I officially left the team after concluding my fieldwork at the end of 2017 and I went back to Italy to write this research work.

Meanwhile, I had started working on a documentary about the refugees' football sphere in Lebanon through the technical and artistic support of two Italian video makers who were enthusiastic about my research. "Footballization"- this is the title of the documentary that will be published at the end of 2018- focuses on personal and sportive biographies of several football players intertwined with feelings of belonging and solidarity among refugees in Lebanon. Throughout the shooting process, some of my teammates inside Bourj el-Barajneh have been subjects, supporters and partners of *Footballization*[13]. After explaining the tracking idea of the documentary, most of my teammates have actively involved in supporting the construction of the documentary. For instance, some of them introduced us several players and found the archive materials about the Palestinian football during the Lebanese Civil War. Some others became the main characters of *Footballization*: their personal biographies and narratives inside and outside the football field constitute the track of the documentary.

In all of these shooting, the video makers privileged having me inside the camera as mediator: in their view, I was meant to be the character that could "guide" the outsider audience in such a setting. In this way, we found ourselves to discuss in front of a camera discourses, stories, jokes and anecdotes we have shared for the two past years around a football field. Pink's research (2001) has shown to which extent the reflexive approach to research with visual research methods is the acknowledgment that the researcher's subjectivity is a central component to the conceptualization and production

[13] Sensory ethnography and arts practices, as well as a reflexive approach to visual anthropology, especially collaborative and participatory methods, could prove useful in transcending boundaries between the researcher and research participants (Turk Niskač, 2013).

of the research process. Indeed, throughout my fieldwork, it was just in the shooting moment, in front of foreign persons who were shooting the scene benefiting from my role as guiding line, that I stopped being a football player and turned back into my original role as researcher.

Since the beginning of this work I stated how conducting research in a setting characterised by intense securitisation and overlapping discourses of violence, as well as practices of governance, surveillance and exclusion, has raised several ethical dilemmas that have not been completely resolved even at the end of my fieldwork. Among the others, my fieldwork runs the risk of biasing my research by an over-representation of male perspectives in the camp. Indeed, all my teammates and a great majority of my interviewees are young men[14]. While looking at the football arena as an alternative way to go beyond the dominant reading of camps as exclusively spaces of governamentality- the potential gender bias of this approach has been emerging since the very first moment I designed my fieldwork approach.

However, in this case, football and sport is not necessarily the decisive key in relation to this aspect. As a young, male and foreign person who focuses on the open-air social arena of the camp especially during night-time, individual encounters with women along such spatio-temporalities would have not been feasible, even if we were to exclude football. I hereby refer to the patterns of gender segregation especially prevalent through the camp's narrow streets during night-time. These spaces are almost exclusively frequented by male residents: engaging alone in discussion with women would have been considered shameful.

Nonetheless, moving from the football field, I conducted a few interviews with my teammates' family members – including women – when visiting private households. These conversations proved to be particularly fundamental throughout my fieldwork inside the camp in order to build trust with my interlocutors and get inside their daily life activities and their daily cultural practices. The atmosphere of "familiarity" inside the houses especially revealed decisive to share respective biographies and intimate spaces and to enter in depth with the ordinary life of my teammates outside the football

[14] On the entanglement between football and masculine identity, Bromberger, C. (2010). "Sport, Football and Masculine identity". In *Steets, Stadium worlds : Football, Space and the Built Environment,* edited by S. Frank and S. Steets, 181-194. London: Routledge.

field.

Beyond numerous informal conversations and interviews carried out with relevant interlocutors related to the football social avenue inside the camp, I conducted semi-structured interviews with current teammates and former players who had switched to other Palestinian or Lebanese clubs. While the great majority of the interviewees are Palestinians from Lebanon, Palestinians from Syria and Syrians, my research also includes Lebanese citizens, Bangladeshi migrant workers who live inside Bourj el-Barajneh and finally a family of Palestinians who recently returned to Lebanon after thirty years spent in Libya. In order to reconstruct a broader picture out of the peculiarity of my fieldwork, I conducted tens of semi-structured interviews with members of the Camp Popular Committee, UNRWA staff and local associations. The four-year fieldwork also included the analysis of newspapers, textbooks, graffiti, websites, social media and other published material, such as documentaries and photo-video archives (mostly from the American University of Beirut, the Institute for Palestinian Studies and private archives). I tried to integrate such a multiplicity of sources of information and documentation within the specific literature inherently with my research subject and my scientific, historical and anthropological work.

Each of the five chapters present a short introduction summarising the key themes presented in the subsequent ethnographic sections and are followed by a summary, that recapitulates the main findings of each chapter and reconnects them with the general research questions.

The first chapter briefly introduces the historical roots and interconnections of the Palestinian and Syrian displacements in Lebanon in order to understand the current daily socio-spatial interactions and narratives of exile inside the Palestinian refugee camps. Moving from Dionigi's conceptualization of "thin borders" between Syria and Lebanon (2015), the chapter investigates how the troubled history of political antagonism among the different national communities - mainly revolving around the Lebanese civil war (1975-1990)- frame the legal orientation and the geography of the Syrians' displacement in Lebanon.

The second chapter provides moves from an account of the Palestinian community in Syria in order to analyse how the historical and territorial bounds connecting Palestine and Syria conditions the contemporary trajectories of exile from Syria to Lebanon. While not constituting the exclusive core of my research, observing in depth the trajectory of numerous Palestinian refugees from Syria inside Lebanon's refugee camps turned into a relevant perspective within my fieldwork. Through extended ethnographic materials collected inside several refugee camps, the chapter illustrates how the Palestinians' "double catastrophe" contributes to deeply understand the socio-spatial relations emerging between Palestinian and Syrian refugees inside Lebanon's camps.

Moving from the definition of refugee camps as spaces of governamentality (Foucault, 2007), the third chapter depicts how the recent arrival of Syria's refugees into spaces inhabited and labelled for decades by "protracted refugees" sheds an alternative perspective on the morphology and the socio-spatial dynamics of the Palestinian camps and enlightens reasons and dynamics behind the Syrian settlement inside the Palestinian camps. By observing in depth how refugees in precarious legal situations reinvent their mobility patterns between three camps and their neighbourhood, the ethnography investigates how the "historical" spatial relegation imposed on Palestinian camps has turned into a tactics of survival in the context of the increasing securitization discipline adopted since the arrival of Syrian refugees in the country.

In the fourth chapter, that together with the final one constitutes the main core of the ethnography, I describe how the participation within a football team of Bourj el-Barajneh camp revealed fundamental to investigate practices of spatial appropriation in the context of securitization policies around south Beirut area. Focusing on daily cultural practices, biographies and personal trajectories revolving around the only football field inside Bourj el-Barajneh, the dimension of leisure and play become my privileged lens to investigate the everyday logics of exclusion/ inclusion, reformulation of belonging and alliances among Palestinian, Syrian and Lebanese players with distinct legal situations and political backgrounds.

The final chapter frames the whole work in a socio-historical perspective focused on the football society in Lebanon, that contributes to exemplify many dynamics of exclusion/inclusion and reinvention of new belongings emerged in the previous chapters. I move my analysis from an historical recollection of Palestinian football set along a zoom-out process from the refugee camps in order to delineate how multiple unexpected entanglements emerged between the official Lebanon's football society and the refugees' league scattered around the Palestinian camps constitute an alternative resource in the face of the progressive illegalization of the refugees' socio-spatial visibility in the country.

I conclude the thesis by summarising the ways in which Palestinian and Syrian refugees, in the face of a "socio-political hierarchization" between the two refugee national communities, reinterpret the "historical" spatial relegation imposed on Palestinian camps into a tactics of survival. By integrating the relevant literature on the issue with ethnographic insights, I recapitulate how the lens of "play" provides a new perspective of socio-spatial knowledge. By discussing how the nexus between being a "son of the camp" and a "son of the team" reformulates with the recent arrival of new players from Syria, the work shows how the Lebanon's football society can be regarded as a social arena in which ethnic, national and religious identities are constantly "played out" and negotiated on the field.

Figure 1: *The architecture of Bourj el-Barajneh camp (*Source: Samar Maqusi*).*

Figure 2*: Al-Aqsa Sport Club official logo.* (Source: Ahmed Halim)

1. Palestinians and Syrians in Lebanon

Introduction

With more than one million of Syrian refugees and around 300.000 Palestinians inside a country inhabited by 4 million citizens, Lebanon undoubtedly constitutes an emblematic case as regards the demographic presence of refugees within the national territory (Yassin et al., 2015). While clearly differing in terms of geographical trajectories and historical roots, Palestinians and Syrians currently find themselves to share their exiles inside such an overcrowded territory. The current presence of such communities in Lebanon needs to be contextualized and put in relation within the peculiar socio-historical landscape where it is currently settled. Going beyond the mere demographic and geographical aspects, the chapter will focus on how Syrian and Palestinian questions have been deeply intertwined with the Lebanese socio-political dynamics.

Combining a socio-historical synthesis with ethnographic insights, the chapter particularly unsettles the current refugee crisis by looking at how Palestinian and Syrian trajectories and narratives of exile currently contribute to reframe collective feelings of belonging and contested memories in the region. I particularly depict the troubled history of political antagonism among the different national communities in order to understand the current daily socio-spatial interactions between different spatio-temporalities and narratives of exile inside the Palestinian refuge camps.

By focusing in particular on the vivid memories revolving around the Lebanese civil war, the chapter glimpses how the current Lebanese socio-political context is conditioned by the current presence of Palestinian and Syrian refugees in the country. Moving from Dionigi's conceptualization of "thin borders" between Syria and Lebanon (2015), I expound here on how collective and contested memories influence the geography, the political and legal orientation in respect with the current Syrians' displacement in Lebanon. The political orientations adopted by Lebanese authorities will help us to understand to which extent the legal status of refugees turns into an unavoidable variable for refugees' socio-spatial organization inside the Palestinian

camps.

1.1 "We thought it would be just a matter of days"

When the Syrian refugees came here we tried to help them, because we lived really the same situation. The first families coming to Shatila had relations and relatives here in the camp. Syrians were coming here because they knew that the camp is for Palestinians and thought the situation would be better in a place that was already designed for refugees. The associations opened the door, the families opened the door: there was great solidarity indeed. But we thought the Syrian crisis would have lasted for 6 months, 1 year, 1 year and few months! This situation reminded us our destiny in 1948 indeed. Now it is more than seven years for them, while we have been waiting for return for seventy years.[15]

Since the arrival of the very few Syrian refugees in Beirut, Majdi opened the door of his *Nadi Shabab Filistin* (Palestinian Young Club) to the newly displaced people from Syria. "Syrian kids enter in my club by nothing, just to let them play with Palestinian and Lebanese kids and forget what happened in Syria and the war they saw. It's not only Shatila, but it has been happening in all the Palestinian camps. And not only in the camps: all the Lebanese cities are involved in this effort[16]."

Together with the Armenian exile (1915) occurred before the constitution of modern Lebanon (1943), Palestinian and Syrian exiles have constituted the two major refugee communities in the country in terms of demographic and socio-political implications on the national territory[17]. In this sense, Lebanon constitutes the most emblematic situation even in a region that "has witnessed the movement of millions of refugees and migrants across border , itself a result of an endless series of conflicts, colonial and civil wars, genocides, as well as foreign invasions and occupations" (Salih, 2013). In order to understand the current daily socio-spatial interactions between

[15]Majdi (March 2017, 4). Personal interview, Shatila Camp
[16] Ibidem
[17] When around 50.000 Armenians arrived took refuge in Beirut suburbs after fleeing Turkey, Lebanon had not gained its independence. Their initial presence and the following establishment of refugee camps was managed by local authorities and the Maronite Churches in negotiation with the French Mandate Authorities, the League of Nations, and the International Red Cross. (Kevorkian, Nordiguian and Tachjian 2007)

different spatio-temporalities and narratives of exile inside the Palestinian refuge camps, we previously need to retrace the historical roots, interconnections and consequences of the Palestinian and Syrian exiles in the country.

As concerns the first, around 750.000 people were forced to flee the historical Palestine and found shelter around the region in the aftermath of the first Arab-Israeli conflict (1947-1948) and the following establishment of Israel (Pappe, 2007). Within the Middle Eastern region, Palestinians' *Nakba* (catastrophe) does not stand merely as a significant event (Masalha, 2012). Throughout the Palestinian exile, 1948 cannot be considered as a concluded event: it is rather conceived as "a master signifier of the Palestinian people; that is a single nodal point from which all he Palestinian experiences flow" (Ahmed, 2012). It rather should be conceptualized as a fundamental turning point to understand the dynamics up to current days. Up to now, especially inside the Palestinian camps in Lebanon, "remembering 1948 has come to be seen as one of the few legitimate ways in which refugees can make visible their present suffering to a larger audience" (Allan, 2014: 45).

Around 100.000 out of the 750.000 displaced in 1948, mostly from the northern areas of the historical Palestine, found refuge in Lebanon. We are currently assisting to the emergence of the fourth generation of Palestinian refugees born in exile. Given the voluntary nature of registration and the subsequent massive migration of Palestinian refugees from Lebanon, widely divergent estimates emerge in the attempt to identify the total number of Palestinians currently residing in the country[18]. Among the others, a recent survey by the American University of Beirut pinpoints that, in addition to the Palestinian refugees who recently relocated from Syria, between 260,000 and 280,000 Palestinians are actual residents in Lebanon.

Around 5 million Palestinian refugees constitute on of the largest refugee community around the region and probably the most significant in terms of political

[18] Chaaban et al., Survey on the Socioeconomic Status of Palestine Refugees in Lebanon 2015 (Beirut: American University of Beirut and the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East, 2016), 23, http://data.unhcr.org/syrianrefugees/download.php?id=11305; Nawaf A. Salam, "Between Repatriation and Resettlement: Palestinian Refugees in Lebanon," Journal of Palestine Studies 24, no. 1 (1994): 19, ProQuest (59678321).

implications[19]. Just recently, Syrian refugees have started competing with Palestinians for the "leadership" of the overall number of refugees worldwide. The so-called *Syrian refug*ee *crisis* is undoubtedly one of the largest since World War II: around 5.6 million people are currently displaced around the neighbouring countries of Lebanon, Jordan, Turkey and Iraq and beyond[20]. Its proximity to Syria, together with the country's long history of work migration and open border policy, made Lebanon one of the main destinations for Syrian refugees.

"Being refugee in Lebanon is not a Palestinians' prerogative anymore. After losing everything, we have also lost the privilege of being the most numerous refugees in the world[21]" says Khaled, a young Palestinian guy born in Bourj el-Barajneh camp, during an informal meeting with some of our teammates. He bitterly refers to the establishment of the Syrian refugees in Lebanon who had already triplicated Palestinians' number in Lebanon. During the first months of violence in Syria, Lebanese institutions refrained from responding to the arrival of refugees, as both Syrians and authorities expected a rapid resolution of the crisis and an immediate return in Syria.

However, as the violence in Syria expanded in terms of geography and adversity, the inflow of refugees in Lebanon progressively increased with a dramatic progression. Just in 2013, UNHCR recorded the arrival of up to 150.000 persons per month. At the end of 2014, 1.1 million Syrians were registered as refugees in the country. Just after three years of de facto open door policy, on January 5, 2015, the Lebanese authorities endorsed restrictions on the entry of Syrians at the border and their entry and residency conditions. Moreover, in April 2015 UNHCR agreed on Government of Lebanon' request to stop registering newcomers from Syria. Due to the combination of these policies, the official number of Syrian refugees registered in Lebanon has stabilized on around one million[22].

[19] Due to an "exclusion clause" stated both in UNHCR's Statute and in the 1951 Refugee Convention (Akram and al-Azza, 2015), Palestinian refugees fall within the competence of the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA).
[20] Updated statistics are available on the UNHCR website at http://www.unhcr.org/syria-emergency.html
[21] Khaled (September 4, 2016). Personal interview, Bourj el-Barajneh camp
[22] Updated data by UNHCR can be consulted online at:
https://data2.unhcr.org/en/situations/syria/location/71

In front of the current displacement of more than half of Syrian pre-war population, numerous sources underline how – beyond the internal displaced in the country- the major responsibilities in terms of hosting are carried out by the neighbouring countries (Chatty, 2017). As such, in respect with the emergency narrative spread in Europe when it comes to the "refugee crisis" (Greussing & Boomgaarden, 2017), Lebanon is often cited as the most significant counter-example[23]. With more than one million of Syrian refugees and around 300.000 Palestinians over not more than four millions citizens, Lebanon undoubtedly constitutes an emblematic case as regards the pressure of refugees within the national territory (Yassin et al., 2015). However, the presence of Syrian and Palestinian refugees inside Lebanon appears deeply intertwined (Dot Pouillard, 2013) far beyond the mere demographic and geographical dimensions.

Palestinian and Syrian trajectories and narratives of exile currently overlap inside the country and contribute to reframe collective feelings of belonging and contested memories in the region. These displaced men, women, and children have contributed, over the decades, to shape the spatial, political, economic, cultural, and social configurations of the countries where they have fled (Salih, 2013). While clearly differing in terms of geographical trajectories and historical roots, Palestinians and Syrians currently find themselves to share their exiles in Lebanon. How do such narratives of exiles condition the current narratives and practices of coexistence in country with the highest number of refugees per capita around the world[24]?

In order to better understand the refugee-refugee relations emerging inside the camp, we need to briefly recall how "the socio-political context in Lebanon has shaped the attitudes and policies towards the Palestinian population and resulted in their becoming what is known as 'protracted' or 'warehoused' refugee population" (Roberts, 2010:69). The root cause of the troubled relationship between the Palestinian and Lebanese population mainly deals with the multi-confessional structure of Lebanon and the division of power along sectarian lines culminated in a 15 year- Civil War started in

[23] For an overview of regional responsibility-sharing, see Türk, V and Garlick, M (2016). 'From Burdens and Responsibilities to Opportunities: The Comprehensive Refugee Response Framework and a Global Compact on Refugees.

[24] Full data related to the year 2016 are available at: https://reliefweb.int/map/world/refugees-capita-hosting-country-2016-dg-echo-analytical-team-01022018

1975. The implicit basis of the Ta'if Accords (1990) signed at the end of the conflict, that in effect established Syrian hegemony over Lebanon, was the agreement of "all the major Lebanese political forces to blame the Civil War on the Palestinian factor" (Sayigh R., 1995).

Smoking his *arghile* (water-pipe) brought to Tripoli during his flight to Lebanon, Youssef, an old Syrian man from Damascus, reflects:

I cannot live one single day without my arghile. Beyond that, we did not bring much stuff with you: I thought we would have gone back in few weeks. When the situation became really dangerous in Damascus, we moved to Lebanon. I had some relatives in Tripoli and they hosted us few months while we were waiting to go back home. After seven years, I still find myself here in Beddawi camp. I used to look at Palestinians' refugees' life as something very far from our experiences, but now I am afraid that the exile will be our destiny for both of us[25].

Youssef's reflections evoke to which extent the Palestinian exile constitutes an unavoidable paradigm to understand logics and practices of the more recent Syrians' exile in Lebanon. The different temporalities of exile imply an on-going process of interactions and confrontations between the newcomers and the protracted generations of Palestine's refugees. In this term, the confrontation with the respective exiles in the case of Palestinian and Syrian refugees also means reconnecting the current displacement with their own contested memories and perceptions.

According to Youssef, as well as many other Syria's refugees interviewed throughout my fieldwork, the trajectory of Palestinian refugees materialize the worst possible destiny for their future years. "Palestinians have been talking about return since 1948 and they are still here. We also keep on saying 'We want to return', but we are still on our way to the exile"[26]. His wife, who was also assisting at one of our informal meetings bitterly added: "We even tend to forget how our house in Syria was shaped inside. How can we hope to return?"[27]

[25] Youssef (February 8, 2015). Personal interview, Beddawi camp.
[26] Ibidem
[27] Manal (February 8, 2015). Personal interview, Beddawi camp.

Benefiting from the long-term fieldwork spanned between 2014 and 2017, I had the chance to observe in depth how Syrian refugees have been reinterpreting their displacement with the progressive extension of their exile in Lebanon. With the hope to return seeming to progressively vanish due to the prolongation of the conflict in Syria, many authors denote among refugees the emergence of a shared "narrative of neutrality" oriented towards the regret and nostalgia for the past (Pesquet & Dot-Pouillard, 2015). Contextually, numerous Syrian refugees in Lebanon refer to the Palestinian troubled experience of prolonged displacement in the region their prolonged as an inauspicious premonition for their future.

Before focusing in depth on the reciprocal interactions between the exiled communities inside the Palestinian camps, we previously need to contextualize such dynamics within the broader Lebanese scenario. The complex religious composition and confessional affiliations in Lebanon have dictated the nature of the political system, influenced the state-citizenship relationship and social interaction, and affected the position of Palestinians (Roberts, 2010: 72). An "ordinary" tense situation of hostility between citizens and refugees that we may observe in many other countries here is further complicated by Lebanon's recent troubled years. Along this processes, Lebanon does not emerge as a "neutral" host-State but rather as a country with its own conflicting memories both at internal level and in respect with the refugees' presence in the country. As such, the presence of Syrian refugees among the wider populace in Lebanon shapes contradictory sentiments unavoidably framed by ambivalent memories of past and current conflicts, that directly or indirectly influence the practices of coexistence between the national communities in the country.

1.2. Ambivalent War sentiments

The current presence of Syrian and Palestinian refugees in Lebanon needs to be contextualized and put in relation within the peculiar socio-historical landscape where it is currently settled. In this configuration, the historical seeds primarily trace back to conflicting collective memories along the borders of the former Greater Syria. We refer to the entire "Fertile Crescent" in Late Antiquity, which included the modern Syria,

Lebanon, Jordan, historical Palestine and parts of Southern Turkey. The notions of *bilad ash-Sham*, Greater Syria, and Fertile Crescent unity all expressed, each in its own way, the ambition of Damascus to dominate its geographic surroundings (Pipes, 1990).

In this sense, the current Syrian displacement in Lebanon needs to do framed within what Dionigi (2017) conceptualized as a contested "thin boundary". While looking at the current trajectories of Syrians in Lebanon, we should consider to which extent such events tackle with a long history of political antagonism among the different national communities. Moreover, the discourses of affiliations and antagonism further complicate among and even inside the communities involved after the new articulations that emerge in the aftermath of the Syrian conflict.

Along the last decades, in fact, the Syrian regime and some of the Lebanese Panarabist factions have challenged the sovereignty and independence of Lebanon since its origins. For instance, the 1958 civil unrest that took place in Lebanon, occurred as a result of Sunni anger over an attempt by President Chamoun to serve an extra-constitutional second consecutive term, as well as dissatisfaction over the balance of power sharing, was also related to clashing views within Lebanon regarding United Arab Republic (Traboulsi, 2007). Maronite anger, in this sense, stemmed mainly from a proposal that Lebanon join the newly created union of Egypt and Syria. (Cobban, 1985). "The resulting link between domestic politics and regional conflicts has subjected Lebanon to violence and instability as other powers conduct their battles inside Lebanon" (Zahar, 2002: 568).

During the late 1960s and early 1970s, refugees in Lebanon went into a period of transformation with the emergence of an independent Palestinian militant guerrilla movement under the umbrella of the Palestinian Liberation Organization (PLO) in 1964 (Khalidi, 2010). The subsequent 1969- Cairo Agreements signed by Lebanese authorities and PLO banned Lebanese security forces from entering and transferred the camp control to Palestinian militias despite the opposition of numerous Christian and nationalist parties (Siklawi, 2010). In the years leading up to the outbreak of the Lebanese war, violence erupted regularly between the various militias, particularly between the Maronite Phalangists and the Palestinians until its full-scale eruption on 13 April 1975 with its first massacre, known as the "Ayn al-Rumana incident", where 27

Palestinians were killed by Kata'ib militants and caused other massacres in the so-called two-years war from April 1975 to November 1976 (Picard, 2002).

Palestinian factions sided with left-wing Muslim militias against right-wing groups led by the Phalangists, while in 1976 the Syrian Army entered the war in support with the former side. After their direct involvement as a fighting side inside the Lebanese civil war, Palestinians are made the scapegoat for the Lebanese civil war (1975-1990), being marginalized because considered as the "enemy within" by the local society (Sfeir, 2010) and subjected to a humiliating regimen of socioeconomic strangulation and denial of basic human rights (Khalidi, Riskedahl, 2010). According to this logic, the presence of the refugees is reduced to counterinsurgency policing treating refugees to 'security' subjects and the camps as "security islands" (Hanafi; 2011; 34)

Contextually, the Syrian regime has confronted Lebanon sovereignty for decades with direct military interventions and military occupation since 1976 (Dionigi, 2017: 23). Even on the other hand, Lebanon's civil war constitutes an unavoidable turning point as regards the modalities through which the current Syrian presence is framed in the country. With the rise of the Syrian Ba'ath party in 1963, the watershed in the Lebanese-Syrian relation gave rise to a long period of antagonism (Aboultaif, 2016). Tensions and violence between the two countries have culminated with the direct Syrian military intervention during the Lebanese Civil War (Khalidi, 1984). It was the eruption of the Lebanese-Palestinian warfare in April 1975, with the fear of a Christian/Muslim partition of the country and a wholesale PLO takeover that provided the context and pretext for sustained Syrian military intervention (Khalidi, 1986). After fighting numerous factions throughout the war, Syrian troops expanded their military control until they defeated the last brigades of Lebanese Army and captured the presidential palace in late 1990 (Traboulsi, 2007).

The end of Lebanon's civil war was marked by a more direct hegemonic role of the Syrian regime over the country's political and economic spheres, with a high level of complicity from the Lebanese rulers with the Syrian regime. The Syrian troops used to control the entire country with the exception of the southern area formerly occupied by the Israeli Army. The overall presence of Syrian occupation was visible around the country involved any aspect the daily life of Lebanon's inhabitants. While talking about

that period, Mahmoud, one of my Lebanese teammates used to tell me this personal anecdote: "In the early 2000s I worked in a luxury restaurant in Raouche[28]. Syrian officials used to have fun every night: we had to serve them without standing up our head. We were treated like slaves: I cannot forget those moments now that Syrians came to Lebanon asking for help".[29]

The assassination of the Prime Minister Rafik Hariri on February 14th 2015 constitutes an unavoidable turning point in the Lebanese-Syrian relations (El-Husseini, 2012). Syria was immediately considered by many sources as the prime suspect, although no motive has been clearly demonstrated.[30] During the next days, favoured by an extensive international support[31], massive protest demonstrations were staged in Lebanon demanding the Syrian withdrawal from the country. However, the hasty Syrian withdrawal from Lebanon on April 30, 2005 did not put an end to its influence in Lebanese domestic affairs. Syria had Hezbollah and Amal among its major allies: Hezbollah had proved ready for mobilization to protect Syria's interest. (Aboultaif, 2016: 173).

The Syrian withdrawal from the Lebanese soil occurred in the aftermath of the 2005- Revolution of the Cedars happened just six years before the uprisings and the consequent conflict in Syria. Along the last years, narratives of contested memories and their influence on the troubled "Lebanese-Syrian brotherhood" (Abou Khalil, 1991) have constituted one of the recurrent themes throughout my research. In this regards, the Syrian civil conflict turned into a long-term "process of rebordering" far beyond its geographical extension (Vignal, 2017). Along this perspective, these processes reconnect in Lebanon with another pivotal moment: the Lebanese civil war (1975-1990).

[28] Raouche is a luxurious residential and commercial neighborhood along Beirut seaside.
[29] Mahmoud (October 13, 2016). Personal interview, Haret Hreik.
[30] In 2007 a Special Tribunal for Lebanon (STL), based in Leidschendam (near The Hague) was established by the UN to try individuals charged in the Hariri bombing and the subsequent killings. On 30 June 2011 the STL issued warrants for the arrest of four (later five) individuals linked to Hezbollah.
[31] Recalling several resolutions adopted since the Seventies, in 2004 the United Nations Security Council passed resolution 1559 demanding the withdrawal of Syrian troops. Full text is available at http://unscr.com/en/resolutions/1559

1.3. Overlapping scapegoat(s)

By moving back to the collective memories revolving around the Lebanese civil war we can shed a light on how the coordinates of the current socio-political context bond with the presence of Palestinian and Syrian refugees. As per the formers, Lebanon's recent history is intrinsically related with its involvement in the "Palestinian question". On one hand, after 22 years of foreign occupation in the southern area of the country ended in May 2000, Lebanese-Israel antagonism has not definitely ended with the July War in 2006. Rather, since its 2006 military success resisting the Israeli ground invasion, Hezbollah has presented itself as a major defender of national Lebanese sovereignty and a significant actor on the military map of the region (Meier, 2016: 106).

Moreover, the open question of the Palestinian refugees and the issue of their return to Palestine play an unavoidable role along these national antagonisms and international conflicts (Knudsen & Hanafi, 2011). In the previous pages I tried to resume how the Lebanese civil war that constitutes the decisive key-moment as regards the narrative related to the current refugees' presence in Lebanon.

Concerning the newly displaced populations in Lebanon, resentment against the Syrian regime's control over Lebanon grew in the post-civil war years, yet this discontent was easily channelled through the dominant discourses into an unchallenged xenophobic and racist sentiments against Syrian workers (Chit & Ali Nayel, 2013). The nature of the Lebanese authorities' hostility towards the very existence of Syrians – heavily directed on poorer Syrians who predominately compose the bulk of the "refugees" – is filtered through the paradigm and realities of the many political conflicts that are occurring within and outside of Lebanon (Al Saadi, 2015).

Contextually, such antagonisms interact with the collective memories related to the Lebanese Civil War, which still constitutes an unavoidable key to reinterpret the current ordinary. This is exceptionally true in the dominant discourses interpreting the causes of the long civil war that destroyed the country between 1975 and 1989, following which the ruling elite declared a general amnesty and resorted to explain the civil war as a result of the interference of the "Palestinians" or "Syrians" in local Lebanese affairs. This is what emerged during an in depth interview with a young

Christian woman from the Mount Lebanon region:

The Syrians who currently come to Lebanon as refugees are the same Syrians who used to rule our villages. They ordered us when and how we could move, and here they occupied our homes and converted them into torture centres. We know that we should not identify a government with its citizens, but it is not really easy when your friends and relatives disappeared from their homes.

Which kind of individual re-elaboration is requested in such an entangled situation where the refugee is deeply associated in the collective imaginary of the occupier?[32] In the public opinion, the "ills" of Lebanon are always relegated to being the result of interference of "stranger" and/or "foreign" elements (Chit & Ali Nayel, 2013). In this sense, how is the recent establishment of Syrian refugees in Lebanon interpreted in the light of the internal consequences of the Syrian conflict and the "historical" presence of Palestinian ones? As mentioned before, the Palestinian exile constitutes an unavoidable paradigm through which we can retrace the logics of the recent institutional positioning in front of the refugees who have been getting refuge from Syria.

In the previous pages I have expounded on the mutual process of mutual identification that emerge between Palestinians and Syrians in terms of neglected perspectives of an immediate return to the respective homes. In this sense, the newcomers interpret the prolongation of Palestinian catastrophe since 1948 as a warning for what concerns their permanence in Lebanon. On the same way, the fear of not going back home soon such as the case of Palestinians is not only shared by the newly displaced from Syria. It is the same Lebanese host society that is particularly threatened by the perspective of the prolongation of the Syrians' permanence in Lebanon, as it has been the trajectory of Palestinian refugees since 1948.

The issue of Lebanon's long-term refugee "burden" (Cherri et al., 2016) and the problem of permanence, which has loomed over the Palestinian refugee community, have been mirrored in official responses to the Syrian refugee crisis. Indeed, the not-so-distant past, when Syrians were positioned as the unwelcome occupiers of Lebanon,

[32] Noha (March 4, 2017). Personal Interview, Beirut.

continues to influence public and political opinions vis-à-vis refugees from Syria today: the rejection and racism that refugees from Syria face in Lebanon cannot be viewed outside of this recent history of animosity against Syrians (Fiddian-Qasmiyeh, 2018).

1.4. The migrant patterns

Within such multiple political antagonisms, the borders between Syria and Lebanon have played a fundamental role in crafting the relations between the two countries. Since the deflagration of the violence and the flow of million refugees, the Syrian-Lebanese borders have been univocally described as the entry point for people who were fleeing the current conflict. However, during the previous years, the openness of the Syrian-Lebanese borders have been exceptionally loose and have allowed for the flow of Syrians and Lebanese as well as their goods across the border, which constituted a vital social resource for both the national communities (Dionigi, 2017).

Moreover, we have to reconsider how the historical thinness and porosity of this border restores its ambivalent direction. As such, this bidirectionality interests not just goods (Syria has been for decades the main commercial partner for Lebanon), but turned to be an unavoidable resource for thousands of people who fled Lebanon's numerous conflicts. For instance, many people in Lebanon attest that the fact that Syrian refugees are being coerced towards a refugee status is similar to that which many Lebanese faced during the 2006 Israeli war on Lebanon or the Civil War (Chit & Ali Nayel, 2013). After finding refuge beyond the border, numerous Lebanese families have settled down in Syria during the last decades. Strangely, many of them find themselves forced to go back to their homeland in the aftermath of the current conflict in Syria.

Fatma, a young Palestinian woman from Syria who fled Lebanon at the end of 2012 remembers:

We came here because my mother is Lebanese and my relatives lived in Beirut. For the first three months we stayed at my aunt's place in Beirut, because we believed we would have soon gone back to Yarmouk. My mother had left Lebanon during the civil war together with my father, who was working in Lebanon at that time. After thirty years spent in Syria, my mother feels more Syrian than Lebanese. Just imagine that when we

had to leave Syria after that the government airplanes bombed our home, she was the only one among us who kept on crying. I kept on telling her: 'You are going back to your country'. But there was nothing to do it. Syria was her country.[33]

Fatma's familiar biography contributes to delineate the ambivalent crossing of the Syrian-Lebanese thin borders. In order to understand the substantial open-door policy implemented by the Lebanese authorities until the end of 2014, we need to reconnect to the socio-economic relations between the two countries since Lebanon's foundation. In this case, while her mother settled down in Syria in during the Lebanese civil war, her father used to work in Lebanon even back to that time. In particular, we have to frame within the current "refugee-scape" the past presence of around 300.000 Syrian workers who have moved to Lebanon since the Seventies (Kassir, 2004). As such, Lebanon served as an open market for hundreds of thousands of Syrian workers who flocked to Lebanon in particular during the reconstruction boom at the end of the Civil War.

Here is another contribution by Shaza, a young Syrian woman on her thirties I came into contact during my fieldwork in Bourj el-Barajneh:

My family is from Aleppo while my husband is from Al-Ghouta. We left Syria one year and half ago and directly come to Bourj el-Barajneh from Damascus because we knew some Lebanese families who used to live here. My husband used to work in Lebanon before the uprising and, when problems started in our area, came back to Syria in order to look after us. At the beginning, we expected the war could end very soon, but after one year and half we fled Syria. A car bomb exploded near the schools where my children used to go, the situation was quite tense and there were checkpoints everywhere. We came here and settled down where my husband used to live before the war. We have just renovated our residency permit in Lebanon, but if nowadays we cross the border back to Syria we cannot come to Lebanon anymore. Before everything was so much simple: we just crossed the border back and forth to renovate the Visa.[34]

[33] Fatma (December 2014, 17). Bourj el-Barajneh camp
[34] Shaza (September 2015, 12). Personal Interview, Bourj el-Barajneh camp.

Many of the Syrians recently arrived in Lebanon were not new to the country, but had been working there for many years mainly in the construction and agriculture sectors. In many cases, the conflict in Syria means that many of these workers' wives and children have fled Syria to join men who have been working in Lebanon for some time (Chatty, 2017). As per Shaza's familiar trajectory, previous economic migrations have worked as pattern for refugee migrations. In many cases, close ties and often extended family networks across the two countries allow Syrians to rely on transnational networks that currently become an unavoidable resource during hard times.

These insights further complicate the theoretical and legal distinction between forced migration and voluntary migration. While Shami (1993) suggests that in the Middle East "displacement often leads to labour migration as a coping strategy", in the case of Syrians refugees in Lebanon labour migration constituted a pattern and a resource for a successive refugee migration. Moreover, such socio-economic connections built through the previous decades often overlap with cultural and religious connections spread beyond the national borders. This is especially the case of communities spread in the fuzzy border areas along the newly formed Akkar governorate, a fertile rural area that has been socially and economically marginalised in Lebanon. Along such border areas, family and religious still consist of the most prevalent resources once refugees and host communities find themselves forced to find ways of living together in an increasingly crowded territory (Trombetta, 2016: 31).

Such historical social, cultural, political and economic ties further complicate the imaginary linked to the current presence in Lebanon of people fleeing Syrian on-going conflict. This is not just a peculiarity of border areas as the Akkar region formerly described. Most of the Syrian families have largely made their journeys in stages, first arriving in Akkar or the Wadi Khalid region in north Lebanon and gradually making their way to join their spouses in the Bekaa Valley, Tripoli and Beirut (Chatty, 2017).

Right in Beirut, I came to know Amin, a young Syrian guy coming from Dera'a:

After the uprising and the consequent violence in the city I left for Jordan in 2011. But after few months I managed to come back to Damascus and leave Syria once more in

order to stay at my cousin's house in Tripoli. They were living in Lebanon since the Nineties and he has recently brought the whole family to Tripoli. But for us it was not easy to share the apartment with them: there was no privacy and I did not feel at home. So after two months that my husband could not find any job, we left again and came to Shatila. We had some friends here and, after staying at their place for a week, they helped with finding a house.[35]

The protraction of the Syrian conflict transformed the perception of its possible repercussions within the Lebanese context (Dionigi, 2017). Before expounding on how these distinct temporalities and narratives of displacement interact inside such Palestinian camps, we need to broadly expound on how Lebanese authorities reacted in front of such an overlapping presence of refugees. Under which condition can Syrian refugees regulate their own legal presence in Lebanon? The political orientations and dispositions adopted by Lebanese authorities will reveal to which extent the precarious legal status of refugees deeply condition the refugees' socio-spatial organization inside the Palestinian camps.

1.5. Institutionalized illegalization(s)

In April 2014, the UNHCR reported the registration of more than a million Syrian refugees in a country whose population counts around 4 million citizens. The anti-refugee discourse is perceptible both across popular and political levels, and also across policy and practice throughout Lebanon – there has been extensive documentation of the mass evictions of Syrian refugees by numerous Lebanese municipalities, for instance (Fiddian-Qasmiyeh, 2018). With most of the weight in terms of numbers and services delocalized around the different regions in the country, it was especially local administrations that were increasingly affected by the demographic pressure. Violent tensions between locals and refugees were recorded in several areas around the country: as an answer arbitrary curfews were established– illegal under national and international law – in over 40 municipalities (Chatty, 2017).

[35] Amin (October 2017, 12). Personal interview, Shatila camp.

Before the crisis began in Syria, Syrians arriving in Lebanon were granted an "arrival visa" for a stay of six months, extendable to another six months upon request and free of charge. However, as the Syrian refugee crisis worsened in 2014, and in response to the massive flow of refugees entering into the country, the Lebanese authorities started to develop methods to monitor, control and systemize the entry of Syrian nationals (Zucconi, 2017) aimed at decreasing the number of Syrian nationals in the country.

In October 2014 a new policy on Syrian displacement was adopted aiming at reducing access to the country and encouraging return to Syria (Janymr, 2016). Following the entry into force of the new regulations on January 5th 2015, only a limited number of Syrians have been able to enter the country through the official channels. The new procedure involved the issuing of a short-term visa for Syrian nationals, allowing them to enter Lebanon under different categories: tourism, work visit, property owner, tenant, student, shopping, traveling to another country, medical visit, an appointment with a foreign embassy, and humanitarian entry. In case they do not fall within any of the above-mentioned categories, they are asked to provide a "pledge of responsibility" signed by a Lebanese national or registered entity, which means they need to secure themselves a sponsor (Janmyr, 2016).

For the first time along decades in Lebanese-Syrian relations, a regime of border restriction has been activated for the Syrian citizens[36]. The Lebanese government has been progressively reinforcing its surveillance along the official border crossings. At the same time, these restrictions encouraged numerous informal crossings beside the five official border crosses along the border. Beside the requirements requested by the Lebanese border authorities, we should also take into account how the security problem within Syria deeply constitutes a major issue on the way to leave Syria.

Hani, a Syrian man on his forties with whom I spend several afternoons in Bourj el-Barajneh, recollects his troubled way to Lebanon:

During Ramadan in 2014, my son was kidnapped and I was requested to pay 4 million Syrian pounds, around 50.000$. My family is made up of nine members: when Abed

[36] However, along the next chapter we will discover how these restrictions were previously implemented in respect with the Palestinian refugees from Syria.

was kidnapped, I sent them all in Lebanon. I did not have any money at that time because even my shop was stolen months before. I do not how but these gunmen had problems among them and my son was liberated, thanks God. Then, we decided to leave Lebanon and reach our family. However, the situation was quite tense and I could not cross the border because I had lost my identity card. Therefore, I crossed the border on foot, walking up and down the mountains in the snow. It took me two days but at the end I ended up in Lebanon. But since I do not have any official visa stamp with me, I have to hide myself inside the camp.[37]

Hani's biography contributes to exemplify to which extent the legal troubles do not end once even the Syrian border is finally crossed. Along the same orientation to monitor, control and reduce the Syrian presence in the country, the Lebanese authorities adopted new rules for the renewal of the residency permit in the country. Refugees— both already in Lebanon and at the border— unable to access the country or to renew their residency permits due to the new measures have been relegated into a "suspended" extraterritorial space delimited at one end by the restrictions imposed by the 2015 new regulation and by Syrian inhabitability on the other end (Dionigi, 2017). When the Government of Lebanon requested the UNHCR to stop registering those coming from Syria in April 2015, refugees found themselves forced to look for a sponsor as the only possibility to seek refuge in Lebanon.

Starting from April 2015, both in the cases of "entry for work" and "entry not for work", the applicant needed to provide a "pledge of responsibility" at the General Security Office and pay a fee of 200 USD/per person above 15 years old for a 6 months residency permit (Janymr, 2016). However, the difficulty in collecting the required documents, the cost of the sponsor and the volatility of the whole sponsorship system, which is very much relegated to the informal level, created a challenging procedure that most Syrians were unable to follow.

During the last few years, and especially since the emanation in January 2015 of new regulations in order to get a residency permit, most of the Syrians gradually lost their own residency permit in the country. Under the January 2015 residency regulations, refugees applying to renew their residency permits are sorted into two

[37] Hani (October 2016, 12). Personal interview, Bourj el-Barajneh

categories: those registered with UNHCR, the United Nations refugee agency, and those who are not and must find a Lebanese sponsor to remain in the country legally[38]. However, several organizations and refugees reported that numerous refugees registered with UNHCR reported that officials still asked them to provide a sponsor, even though the regulations do not require it.

Moreover, according to the new dispositions, Syrian citizens' legal permanence in Lebanon requires the contemporary attestation of a regular rent contract, a guaranty by a Lebanese *kafil* (guarantor) and the willingness not to work in the country[39]. Beyond these requirements – already quite unbearable for any foreigner based in Lebanon- each Syrian should have paid a 200$ residency permit to be renovated every year. Due to these measures, according to a survey conducted by the University of Saint Joseph with the support of UNHCR, around 78,7% of Syrian refugees in Lebanon was living in Lebanon without a residency permit at the end of 2016[40].

1.6 "Real" and "Ideal" refugees

Legally based on a 2003 Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) signed with UNHCR, Lebanese government formally recognises the right of refugees to remain in Lebanon if their lives or freedom are in danger in their home countries[41]. However, Lebanon does not consider itself an asylum country, but rather a transit country for people who seek asylum in a country other than Lebanon. According to these dispositions, an asylum seeker in Lebanon is entitled to stay in the country for six months (with a possible extension up to 12 months) waiting for UNHCR finalizing the resettlement procedures.

However, how could such legislative instrument deal with such a complex

[38] Human Rights Watch (January 2016,12) "Lebanon: Residency Rules Put Syrians at Risk". https://www.hrw.org/news/2016/01/12/lebanon-residency-rules-put-syrians-risk

[39] Concerning the details, check Human Rights Watch report (January 2016, 12): " 'I Just Wanted to be Treated like a Person'".How Lebanon's Residency Rules Facilitate Abuse of Syrian Refugees". See https://www.hrw.org/report/2016/01/12/i-just-wanted-be-treated-person/how-lebanons-residency-rules-facilitate-abuse

[40] Institute Des Sciences Politiques, Universtè Saint-Joseph de Beyrouth: "Perception of Security among Refugees and Host Community". Report available at: http://www.isp.usj.edu.lb/pdf/LR%20-%20SYRIAN%20REFUGEES%20IN%20LEBANON%20BETWEEN%20RESILIENCE%20AND%20VULNERABILITY.pdf

[41] The full-text is available online at: http://www.frontiersruwad.org/pdf/FR_Public_Statement_MOU_Nov_2003.pdf

reality in terms of numbers, demographic pressure and political antagonisms? More than one million Syrian people are currently recorded as refugees by UNHCR. Despite the registration practices do not entitle refugees any legal right at national level, the 2003 "MoU" revealed in practice almost inconsistent. Lebanon, where almost one third of its population is composed by refugees, reveals as a *de facto* permanent host country for more than one million Syrians and around 300.000 Palestinian refugees.

If, as mentioned before, the initial open door policy towards Syrian nationals was due to the thin border between the two countries, the following process of progressive refugees' illegalization cannot be fully understood without taking into consideration Lebanon's implication in respect with the Palestinian question. Once more, the protracted presence of Palestinian refugees in the country constitutes the institutional paradigm in order to retrace the logic behind the institutional dispositions adopted in respect with the newcomers from Syria. In this sense, the correlation between lexical categorizations and legislative disposition reveals as the most exemplificative element.

Despite being or not registered with UNHCR, Syrian nationals in Lebanon are legally defined as displaced ("nazihoun" in Arabic) rather than *lajioun* (refugees). This specification finds its *raison d'être* within the Lebanese non-adherence with the 1951 Geneve Convention on the Status of Refugees (Janmyr, 2016). The protracted Palestinian issue is often cited as a reason for a continued refusal of many states in the Middle East to sign the 1951 Convention on the Status of Refugees and its 1967 Protocol (Stevens, 2014). Lebanon is not an exception in this regards, as its authorities have been declaring to ensure that Palestinian refugees retain a sort of special status that should enable them to return to their homeland.

Therefore, Palestinian refugees in the Lebanese narrative embody the figure of "ideal refugees" (Fiddian-Qasmiyeh, 2013), as they are considered legally entitled to a right to return that goes back until 1948. In this sense, the term "refugee" is univocally associated with the Palestinian presence, while displaced as referred to Syrian nationals seems to evoke a more precarious legal status (Stevens, 2014). We can trace how Lebanese authorities institutionalized a political hierarchization between the two refugee groups in the country.

On the issue, the "Policy on Syrian Displacement" adopted in October 2014

entail restrictive conditions that are *only* applicable to Syrian nationals, and hence result discriminatory in comparison to other foreigners (Frangieh, 2015). Always according to Frangieh, the recent exclusion from the list of several categories of people entitled to enter Lebanon aims at maintaining selectivity in determining its applicability in respect with Syrian nationals in the country. The very fact that the Lebanese government prefers to substitute "refugee" with the hollow phrase, "displaced", is an attempt by the authorities to circumvent any obligations and privileges owed to such individuals, thereby enacting laws and allowing policies that treat Syrian refugees as undesirable foreigners, devoided of any difficult humanitarian or political circumstances (al-Saadi, 2015).

At institutional level, the rhetoric involving the Palestinian "special status" relegates Syrian displaced within a spiral of "un-refugization" and a progressive institutionalized illegalization. As a logic consequence of such dispositions, around 80% of the Syria's displaced currently stay in Lebanon without valid legal papers. In everyday life, this fact determines a significant increase of the feelings of insecurity and vulnerability: Syrian refugees lacking valid legal papers can be arbitrarily detained by Lebanese authorities and then released with a deportation order pending on them. Despite practices of forced repatriation (*refoulment)* to Syria have been officially suspended during the last years under international pressure, a pending deportation order implies significant repercussions in terms of mobility and consequently access to work and services.

As mentioned before, while embodying the "idealtype of refugees" both in legal terms and in a widespread rhetoric, the trajectory of Palestinian refugees in Lebanon materialize a sort of nightmare as regards the current perspectives of Syrians' "integration" in the country. In this sense, the twelve Palestinian refugee camps mostly spread around the major Lebanese cities materialize in the Lebanese imaginary the hardship to deal with hosting refugees on the national soil. Along this narrative we need to frame the decision by the Lebanese authorities not to erect any refugee camp for Syrian displaced.

1.7. Fear of the camps

The question of hosting and ensuring protection for Syrian refugees in light of the Lebanese government stance against the erection of camps created many debates concerning different and implemented solutions. Generally speaking, establishing camp for refugees is a strategy that host countries often adopt in order to pressure the international community to provide services and assistance to refugees (Sommers, 2001). As regards the regional response to the Syrian displacement, Jordan and Turkey have agreed- even along different agreements with the International Organizations – to build refugee camps along the border regions with Syria.

Lebanon, despite being the country mostly affected by the refugees' demographic presence, has been strictly refusing the establishment of refugee camps to host Syrian refugees. There appears to be a significant schism between the two main actors concerning potential locations for proposed camps: while le Lebanese government favours the establishment of camps within Syria or close to the border, UNHCR has carefully and cautiously been calling for the establishment of camps in safe areas well within the Lebanese border.

To understand such an apparent controversy, we need once more to look at the complex multi-levelled historical controversial linkages resumed in the previous pages. Among the others, one must bring to the table the widespread alarmism inside the Lebanese society in respect with the Palestinian camps and their troubled relations with the host country (Khalidi, 2010). The debate and official decisions concerning camps for refugees in Lebanon remains directly linked by many to the past and present experience of Lebanon vis-à-vis the Palestinian refugee camps (Yassin et al., 2015).

In particular, the previous decades of political antagonisms and violence between Palestinian refugees and part of the Lebanese society represent a dangerous warning in respect with the current establishment of Syrian refugees within the country. A recurrent statement by Lebanese governmental, municipal, and local community representatives when refuting the option of hosting Syrian refugees in Lebanon falls under the heading of: "We learned from the Palestinian camp experience" (Yassin et al, 2015).

Far beyond elements of basic support and hospitality towards the Syrian refugees quite spread at local level in the short-term, such discourses significantly regard the dominant discourses propagated by leading political forces and elites. Quoting a delegate of the Lebanese prime minister, the current presence of Syrians in Lebanon cannot be fully understood without putting on the table "the paranoia and the fears due to the history of the Palestinian camps in Lebanon"[42]. In this sense, Syrian refugees in Lebanon inherit a widespread feeling of blaming for Palestinians' troubled social and security failures for the last decades. As such, the Palestinian camp experience becomes the "scarecrow" behind the question of establishing refugee camps for Syrian refugees in Lebanon. (Yassin at al., 2015)

Palestinian camps are still currently perceived and described as the most violent and dangerous places in Lebanon. Due to their protracted presence in the country, they embody the idealtipical figure of the distancing and of the double exclusion both from the homeland and from the Host State (Agier, 2014). On the institutional side, Palestinian camps, located in the urban suburbs and exposed to a sever military control of its spaces and the mobility of its inhabitant, comply with the logics of confining that is typical of the "geo-logistics of refugees" by the State authorities (Agier, 2015).

Once more, the Palestinian experience in Lebanon reveals its ambivalence as regards the policy adopted in respect with the recent Syrians' arrival in the country. As such, the fact that Palestinians are considered in the official rhetoric as the "real refugees" conditions Syrians' precarious legal presence in Lebanon. From the other side, when it comes to provide practical solutions to host the newcomers, the Palestinian experience turns into a nightmare that should not be replicated.

Legal and political exclusions are intrinsically tied to one another, since political tensions are usually channelled through legal instruments in order to enact laws that limit the refugees' rights and differentiate them from other groups. Therefore, this dichotomy tends to polarize the geographical trajectories of the two exiles while

[42] Shadi Karam's speech along the conference "Post-UN General Assembly Summit (19-09-16) on Refugees and Migrants". Beirut, American University of Beirut (AUB), 24/10/2016.

"equally" confining both Palestinian and Syrian refugees within precarious and marginalized socio-economical spheres.

1.8 Informal settlements and urban refugees

While declaring their opposition in regards with the establishment of permanent refugee camps for Syrians, Lebanese authorities have rejected almost any proposed alternative-sheltering model. Once more, the motivation deals with the troubled history of the Palestinian refugees in Lebanon, materialized by the "negative" model offered by refugee camps spread all over the coastal areas of the country. Therefore, any local and international attempts to propose long-term housing solution for the newcomers are perceived as threatening for the national stability.

Throughout the last seven decades, barely any political parties and authorities have openly supported Palestinian settlement in Lebanon, as citizenship in the country would weaken their claim to a right of return (Salih, 2013). As such, the rhetoric of opposing any "permanent" solution in order to discourage the Syrians to stay in Lebanon longer recalls the building policies over Palestinian camps in Lebanon. This threat of *tawteen* (permanent settlement) would give rise to a contested theory that any improvement of refugee conditions and rights would eventually lead to both a desire and ability to gain citizenship (Khawaja, 2011). Throughout the decades of exile, in fact, any attempt to renovate the camps' architecture and material conditions have always been opposed by the Lebanese authorities, as well by refugee themselves. According to this logic, renovating a refugee camp would stabilize the refugees' presence in the country, and compromise their right to return to Palestine (Hanafi & Long, 2010).

Taking into consideration the complexities and the scale of the Syrian presence in Lebanon, intertwined with the government's no-camp policy, the shelter opportunities are extremely various as they are also affected by the local setting particularities. Based on the UNHCR 2015 shelter survey held at national level, the great majority of refugees are living in apartments and substandard buildings (Yassin et al., 2015). With most of them paying rent and living in urban and semi-urban areas, the major problem regards the precarious security of tenure.

On the issue Zaher, one of our Syrian teammates who currently live in the eastern Beirut district of Bourj Hammoud recalls:

When I came to Lebanon I firstly stayed at my uncle's place in Tripoli. After a friend of mine found a job inside a milk factory in Bourj el-Barajneh, I moved to the camp: I used to sleep in a small room inside the same factory. But the work was too hard if compared to the salary: 500$ for twelve hours per day. Everyday! So once I had the opportunity to leave the job and that room, I did it. I found a job in a supermarket around Bourj Hammoud and I decided to move there. The job was better indeed. But finding a decent accommodation around there became a nightmare. During the last 6 months I had to change room three times. The first time, during Ramadan, the landlord passed by one day to communicate that he needed the apartment in few days: he had found a better option to rent and we did not have any contract. I started looking for a new place but it turned to be quite hard: everything was full and the vacant places were so expensive! I was afraid of not finding a roof, and at the same time we could not move far because my job was here around. What really worries here is the fact that you do not have any security even for your home. Everything is based on oral agreements and you do not have guaranty.[43]

The lack of security of tenure in urban contexts is mostly overshadowed, especially at international level, by the visibility of informal settlements. Roughly 42.000 tents are scattered across the country in approximately 1,500 locations throughout Lebanon mainly concentrated in the North and in the Bekaa Valley (UNHCR, 2014). The majority of Syrians' informal settlements are located in agricultural fields, which have been converted by their owners and rented to a limited number of families through the control of individuals known as the "Shawish" (Harb & Saab, 2014). The distinct profile and the precarious material conditions have conditioned the numeric proportion related to these settlements. Since the most vulnerable among refugees are generally supposed to live in informal settlements and unfinished buildings, these areas attracted more visibility together with donor support and funding.

[43] Zaher (September 23, 2017). Personal interview, Bourj el-Barajneh.

However, we have to remark here how only 17% of Syria's refugees currently live in these informal settlements compared to over 80% in existing structures. Furthermore, since its foundation Lebanon has shown significant regional inequalities in terms of access to public services, employment and infrastructure. In this regards, most of Syrian refugees have settled in historically marginalized regions of Lebanon and are placed in direct competition for resources and jobs with struggling Lebanese families (Yassin et al., 2015). This is the particularly the case of northen Lebanon and the Bekaa Valley, which are historically characterized by poverty, where most of the informal settlements are distributed in the rural areas far from the major urban centres.

Throughout my four-year fieldwork, I had the chance to observe the development of such gradualness especially around the Lebanese capital, where several families from Syria finally moved due to the major work opportunities (Darling, 2016). In Beirut, where more than 300.000 Syrian have settled down since 2011, Fawaz (2017) showed how that the city's ability to absorb the very large numbers of refugees rested on the flexibility and responsiveness of informal housing markets that reacted resiliently and promptly to the spike in demand. Most of the poor refugees from middle-low incomes moved to its poorest urban suburbs for their cheap rents and accessibility to the main cities (Fawaz, 2009).

Among these marginalized areas, Palestinian camps will emerge throughout my research as peculiar spaces where protracted refugees overlap with the more recent arrival of Syria's refugees. Along the next chapters we will expound on how the Palestinian protracted refugee camps, turning into newly spaces of encampment for numerous Syrian families, subvert this logics of confining and recreate unexpected elusive spaces of meaningful contestation towards the geo-logistics of refugees imposed by national and international authorities.

Summary

For the first time along decades in Lebanese-Syrian relations, a regime of border restriction has been activated for the Syrian citizens. Lebanon's geographical proximity to Syria and its long history of work migration and open border policy made the country the predictable host State for more than one million Syrian refugees. The previous decades of political antagonisms and violence between Palestinian refugees and part of the Lebanese society constitute an unavoidable paradigm through which we have to retrace the coordinates of the recent institutional positioning and legal dispositions in respect with the newly arrived Syrian refugees.

The chapter showed to which extent Lebanese authorities institutionalized a "socio-political hierarchization" between the two refugee communities in the country. While Palestinian refugees in the Lebanese narrative embody the figure of "ideal refugees", the legal definition of Syrian nationals as "displaced people" seems to indicate a more precarious legal status. Such a rhetoric involving the Palestinian "special status" currently relegates 80% of Syrian refugees in the country within a spiral of "un-refugization" and progressive institutionalized illegalization.

From the other, Palestinians' long-term troubled social and security failures in the camps represent the official motivation behind the government's choice for a no-camp policy in respect with Syrian refugees. The great majority of the newly displaced people from Syria currently live in precarious apartments and substandard buildings in the urban landscapes of the major Lebanese cities. Such an institutional dichotomy polarizes the geographical trajectories of the two exiles while "equally" confining most Palestinian and Syrian refugees within precarious and marginalized socio-economic spheres.

Relevant Literature

Abou Khalil, J. (1991). *Lubnān wa Suriyyah: Mashakkat al-'Ukhuwwah* [Lebanon and Syria: The trouble of brotherhood]. Beirut: Sharikat al-Matbū'āt lil Tauzī' wal-Nasher.

Dionigi, F. (2017). "Rethinking Borders: The Case of the Syrian Refugee Crisis in Lebanon," *POMEPS Studies* (25): 22-30.

Dot-Pouillard, N. (2013). "Le mouvement national palestinien et la crise syrienne : une division contenue". In *Pas de printemps pour la Syrie*, La Découverte, edited by François Burgat , 264-267. Paris: La Découverte.

Fiddian-Qasmiyeh, E. (2013) *The Ideal Refugees: Gender, Islam, and the Sahrawi Politics of Survival*, Syracuse: Syracuse University Press.

Janmyr, M. (2016). "Precarity in Exile: The Legal Status of Syrian Refugees in Lebanon", *Refugee Survey Quarterly* 4: 58–78.

Kassir, S. (2004) *Dimuqratiyyat Suriyya wa istiqlal Lubnan: al-bahth 'an rabi' Dimashq.* Beirut: Dar al-Nahar lil-Nashr.

Khalidi, M.A. (ed.) (2010). *Manifestations of identity: The lived reality of Palestinian refugees in Lebanon*. Beirut: Institute for Palestine Studies; Institut français du Proche-Orient.

Khalidi, R. (1986). *Under siege: PLO decision making during the 1982 war*. New York: Columbia University Press.

Khalidi, W. (1984). *Conflict and Violence in Lebanon: confrontation in the Middle East*. Cambridge: Harvard Universtiy Press.

Picard, E. (2002). *Lebanon: A Shattered Country*, London/New York: Holmes & Meier

Salih, R. (2013). "Reconciling Return and Rights: Palestinian Refugees and the Emergence of a "Political Society". Jadaliyya, March 26, 2013.

Sayigh, R. (1995). "Palestinians in Lebanon: (Dis)solution of the refugee problem". *Race and Class* 37 (2), pp. 27-42.

Traboulsi, F. (2007). *A History of Modern Lebanon* London: Pluto Press.

Yassin, N., Osseiran, T, Rassi R and Boustani, M. (2015). *No Place to Stay? Reflections on the Syrian Refugee Shelter Policy in Lebanon*. Beirut: Issam Fares Institute & UN-Habitat.

2. Palestinians of Syria: "The Double Catastrophe"

Introduction

While looking at the refugee-refugee relations inside Palestinian camps, we concretely risk to frame the research according reductionist semantic binaries (Salameh, 2016), with Palestinian and Syrian refugees emerging just as two monolithic entities deprived of any individual subjectivity or agency. In order to better understand the peculiar socio-spatial relations emerging in Lebanon since the arrival of Syrian refugees, we need to revaluate how Palestine and Syria have been geographically and territorially intertwined by the peculiar trajectories of the Palestinian community hosted in Syria since 1948.

After than seven decades from the first Palestinian *Nakba* (1948), nowadays more than half of the about 600.000 Palestinians in Syria are displaced in the country due to the -violence and the extension of the conflict[1]. Even if the numbers were quite insignificant if compared to the millions of Syrian citizens who crossed the same borders, Palestinians refugees- being *de facto* destitute of a sovereign representative State - had to face additional obstacles to flee the country. Moreover, Palestinians from Syria who fled into Lebanon since 2011 became integral part of a long-term problematic relation between the host State and the Palestinian community.

Through extended ethnographic materials collected inside several camps, the chapter illustrates how the Palestinians' "double catastrophe" conditions the contemporary trajectories of exile from Syria to the neighbouring countries. Even if the collective trajectories of Palestinian refugees in Syria do not constitute the main core of my research, I could observe how their double trajectory of displacement in Lebanon turns into a relevant perspective within my fieldwork inside Lebanon's refugee camps. In this sense, analysing the past experience of the Palestinian community in Syria and its

[1] Information included in "UNRWA Syria regional crisis response: january-december 2014". Cfr http://www.unrwa.org/resources/reports/unrwa-response-and-services-. Check all the data about Palestinians refugees and Syria crisis at http://www.unrwa.org/syria-crisis (accessed March 30, 2016)

current breaking up around the region will contribute to deeply understand the socio-spatial relations emerging between Palestinian and Syrian refugees inside Lebanon's camps.

2.1 "Syria was my shelter and became my home"

Between 75,000 and 100,000 persons are estimated to have found refuge in Syria in the aftermath of the Palestinian catastrophe[2]. Due to the brief distance between the historical region of Galilee and the Syrian border, most of the refugees came from the villages located in the northern part of historical Palestine (Al Mawed, 1999). Despite the numerous different trajectories embarked along the displacement[3], in several cases the flight from home occurred in troubled material conditions. Here is one among the hundreds of oral histories collected by the historian Said Al Mawed:

Cars sent by the government carried us from Rmaish to Tyre. There a very long train was waiting at the station. Animal dirt covered the floor of the carriages. Men, women and children were crammed in carriages weeping, approximately ten families in every carriage. No one knew the destination of the train. Bread and water were scarce. Three persons died during the trip. The train stopped for the first time in Homs. I got off in Homs (1999:17).

Among the host States in the region, Syria was regarded as one of the best countries as regards the level of integration of the Palestinians (Al Mawed, 1999). Since the emanation of Law 260 in 1956, Palestinians in Syria had civil rights on par with those of Syrian citizens, lacking only the right to vote and citizenship (Al Hardan; 2012). According to the Article 1: "The Palestinians residing in the Syrian Republic as of the adoption of this law are to be regarded as Syrians in origin in relation to all the

[2] Due to the absence of a verifiable archive on the individual movement between the borders, numbers regarding the Palestinian exodus cannot be precisely verified. However, the number of 75-100,000 results after a matching research between several sources, among which UNRWA, The *Central Bureau of Palestinian Statistics in Damascus*, (PCBSNR) and *The General Authority For the Palestinian Arab Refugees in Damascus*, (GAPAR).

[3] After leaving Palestine, most of the refugees reached Syria from Lebanon through several perilous routes (Al Mawed, 1999)

laws and regulations that have thus fare been adopted viz. employment, work and trade rights and military service, while retaining their original nationality."[4]

The system created a sort of *de facto* equality with the host population: sharply in contrast to the Lebanese case, the twelve Palestinian camps located in Syria were considered as an integral part of the national social fabric. Along this conception, they could benefit of the national public services (Al Mawed, 1999) and the community had developed a strong affiliation with their host country. Fatma, a young lady interviewed in Bourj el-Barajneh camp, resumes this disposition in between two nations:

I love Palestine, it is my homeland and we cannot deny it. But my father was born in Syria, while his grandparents were born in Palestine. Syria is my shelter and it became my home because I was treated as a Syrian citizen. They gave my rights, except for the electoral one. I was a human being, so why should I not love Syria?[5]

Moreover, even after 1948-Nakba thousands of Palestinians have refuged in Syria in the aftermath of several conflicts and collective expulsions emerged in the neighbouring countries[6]. Among the several historical moments, numerous Palestinians who had fled their villages to Golan Heights in 1948, and found once more compelled to leave their homes after Israel's occupation of Golan occurred in 1967. This is the case of Rasha's family, a young woman I have encountered several times throughout my fieldwork in Beirut:

My husband is from Haifa, while my family used to live in Quneitra, on Golan Heights. When Israel occupied Jerusalem and the whole West Bank in 1967, Quneitra's inhabitants had to leave their homes. My parents had to flee their home, once more, and

[4] Quoted in Al-Hardan, Anaheed. "The Right of Return Movement in Syria: Building a Culture of Return, Mobilizing Memories for the Return." in Journal of Palestine Studies, Vol.41, n°2 (2012): 62–79. p.66
[5] Fatma (December 2014, 14). Personal interview, Shatila.
[6] In 1956 Israel expelled to Syria Akrad Ghanama and Akrad Baqqara tribes. Later on, thousand Palestinians took refuge in Syria after Black September in Jordan and during Lebanon Civil War. The last episode regards around 5.000 Palestinians who fled Iraq following Saddam Hussein's fall between 2006 and 2008.

took refuge in Sbeineh camp, around Damascus. Now they had to leave even from there.[7]

The relatively fair treatment of Palestinian refugees inside Syria did not hinder the country's leaders from systematically using the Palestinian resistance as a political tool and ensuring that no independent Palestinian power centre emerged in the region, as it could have challenged his hegemonic position (Qandil, 2012). While stressing on the affiliation developed by Palestinians in Syrian exile, it should be also remarked how the collective political identity of the refugees was affected by the direct intervention of the Syrian State inside the Palestinian political affairs due to Assad's tutelage over some affiliated factions.

In this sense, Damascus has privileged, along a clientelistic modality, the groups directly affiliated to the government: Fatah-Intifada of Abou Moussa, a leader of the leftist area of Fatah who opposed Yasser Arafat, Saïqa and the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine- General Command of Ahmed Jibril (Dot Pouillard, 2013). Despite the official Syrian support of the separatist forces, Palestinians in Syria continued to support the major PLO factions. In his research, Jarrad shows that the language of Arab Nationalism and recognition of the civil rights of Palestinians in Syria did not affect their positive attitude towards the PLO. (Jarrad, 1999)[8].

As in the case of Fatma, many Palestinians of Syria met during these years in Lebanon have revealed this ambivalence in respect with their collective refugee presence in Syria. In their case, the *de facto* legal equality with Syrian citizens also implied being subjected to the same oppressive control by the national institutions. Such elements have particularly emerged throughout the fieldwork during several talks among Palestinians of Syria and the "local" ones from Lebanon, where their being refugee in different countries implied a subtle but constant process of visibility and reciprocal confrontation.

I hereby refer to several "coffee talks" held during sunny afternoons at Najem's place in Bourj el-Barajneh camp in company with numerous Palestinians from Yarmouk as well as many people raised in Lebanon. While hearing the news of further

[7] Rasha (March 2016, 12). Personal interview, Sabra (Beirut).
[8] Nayef. Profiles: Palestinian Refugees in SYRIA. Report available online at: http://www.badil.org/en/al-majdal/item/518-profiles-palestinian-refugees-in-syria.

clashes in Yarmouk camp, Najem, a Palestinian man on his Fifties who has spent most of his life in the Southern Damascus camp, bitterly comments:

In Syria we could work as doctors, engineers, teachers, we had the right to work and to do anything we liked. I was an English teacher both in public schools and at UNRWA ones. Of course, we had to shut up our mouth. We used to enjoy life the same way Syrians did: when they suffer, we suffer. When the tyranny and the power of the mukhabarat (secret services) control them, we are also controlled. We have shared the same sufferance, the same tragedies and the same happiness. The government has controlled everything for the last 50 years: you cannot speak. If you talk too much, you end up in prisons. They are like animals in this regard. I was arrested in 1976 just because I declared myself against the Syrian intervention in Lebanon. Such as Syrian people, we had the right to work and to stay silent. We could join the Palestinian factions, but most of them could not do anything if they were not sided with the regime, such as General Command. To be honest, we had nothing else than normal Syrians' life.[9]

Along such moments of discussions inside Bourj el-Barajneh camp, such memories of equality in respect with the host State citizens unavoidably direct the discussion towards Lebanon's multi-levelled discriminations versus Palestinian refugees. Following Najem's stance, Abou Jamal reminds how before the war in Syria being a Palestinian refugee did not constitute an element of distinction. "Our neighbours were all Syrians: it was just us as Palestinian family in the whole building. You did not even distinguish who was Palestinian inside Yarmouk camp".[10]

According to the same people mentioned before, such accounts are nowadays emphasized by the Lebanese situation made up of legal discriminations and physical multi-levelled marginalization. From the other side, the "artificiality" of Palestinians' collective presence in Syria as mediated by the government's intervention has started weakened with the beginning of the protests in Syria. Ghassan, a young Palestinian from Syria who was joining that conversation, reminded all the present: "Yes we were

[9] Najem (December 2014, 12). Extract from a group discussion. Bourj el-Barajneh camp.
[10] Abou Jamal (December 2014, 12). Extract from a group discussion. Bourj el-Barajneh camp.

like Syrians. But do not forget: the voices over Palestinians have not been positive neither here in Lebanon nor when we were in Syria. Lebanese people blame us for our interventions in their affairs during the war, and now it is our turn in Syria".[11] Once more, two distinct spatio-temporalities and narratives of exile overlap inside such an overcrowded and contentious space as a Palestinian refuge camp established 70 years ago.

2.2. Yarmouk camp: a model of socio-spatial integration?

2.2.1. "Yarmouk was our history"

Within the landscape of refugee camps located in the different countries around the region, a defining element is constituted by the Palestinian camps' perceived and material distance with the urban landscape where they have been spatially integrated throughout the previous decades. In this sense, the issue of material and figurative distance between the refugee camp and the city reveals the ambivalent signification of the former in relation with the national space (Roncayolo, 1990). The prism of marginalization translates a spatial disqualification due to the camp's extraneousness in respect with the urban mutations that regard the whole area (Kodmani-Darshish, 1997).

As such, a Palestinian refugee camp is both a living space in interrelation with its external neighbourhood and, embodying the place of legitimation of the national catastrophe, materializes the confinement of Palestinian refugees in the Host country. In this sense, among the twelve Palestinian refugee camps in Syria, Yarmouk, that is located 8 kilometres south of Damascus, probably constitutes the most emblematic example of its ambivalence. Salim Salamah (2016), a Palestinian young man who has spent most of his life in the camp before settling down in Europe, defines Yarmouk as a "multifunctional camp".

The camp has constituted a sort of model of the spatial and social integration of the Palestinian refugee community in Syria. It was considered by many refugees as a quarter itself within the Damascene urban landscape and was connected with many public services carried out by the Syrian public authorities. In this sense, Palestinian

[11] Ghassan (December 2014, 12) Extract from a group discussion. Bourj el-Barajneh camp.

camps in Lebanon, set along a progressive socio-spatial process of otherness built through the suspicion, mistrust and outside categorization (Hammer, 2005), constitute the antipodal landscapes in respect with Yarmouk. Throughout my research I have been wondering how such an opposition conditions the current daily life of Palestinian from Syria who have resettled into Lebanon's Palestinian camp. During an informal talk with three Palestinian teammates all raised in Yarmouk and currently reside in Bourj el-Barajneh, Rami reminds:

We were part of the Syrian society at 100% as regards the administration of electricity, water and any other service. Anything you needed for your life, you could find inside the camp. Even sport was not an exception: just remember that any school was provided with a football and a volleyball field. And you even had a regular football field inside the camp, a real stadium with the grass![12]

Along the discussion, Yazan confirms: "For sure! Yarmouk is not a camp, it is a city. The smallest road there is better equipped that the main street crossing Bourj el-Barajneh. There were no *zawarib* (small roads) like her, just normal streets like in central Beirut. There were even people who used to come from Beirut to buy stuff in Yarmouk". While sharing the reflection, Rami sounds like unsatisfied with such distinction and replies with: "That's true. But it does not mean that it is not a camp. It was both a real city and a camp: it is the capital of the Palestinian diaspora ("'asma ash-shattat"). The camp was our history as Palestinians: its air was our air". [13]

"Indeed, Yarmouk was the *watan* (homeland), the Palestinian homeland" concludes Yazan before leaving Rami's house to join the football training in the field just few meters far from there. Yarmouk was both the cultural and the socio-economic capital of the Palestinians in the region: 150.000 Palestinians were estimated to live in Yarmouk before 2011 (Gabiam, 2016). People from different economic background used to inhabit the camp: among the others, numerous wealthy businessmen with important economic activities used to live in the camp (Hanafi, 1997).

[12] Rami (April 10, 2018). Extract from a group discussion, Bourj el-Barajneh camp.
[13] Yazan (April 10, 2018). Extract from a group discussion, Bourj el-Barajneh camp.

Moreover, its long-term spatial and social ambivalent integration within the Damascene context contributed to Yarmouk openness in respect with numerous non-Palestinian people looking for quite convenient accommodation around the Syrian capital. In this sense, Yarmouk multi-functionality extended from a "temporary camp" (1957) and a bustling neighbourhood to a "shelter camp," hosting segments of foreign refugees following the 2003 Iraqi war and the 2006 Lebanese war (Dorai, 2007). More recently, it is the turn of the Syrian people internally displaced people by the current conflict.

2.2.2 "Palestinians and Syrians are one"

Despite the strong level of integration within Syrian social and political dynamics, the Palestinian refugee community officially tried to keep itself out of the direct violent confrontations erupted since March 2011. Due also to the absence of an institution representing effectively the Palestinian community, refugees in the camps were aware of the dangers related to a direct involvement in the fighting. Nevertheless, once the uprising started, its spatial integration within the Damascene context made it extremely difficult to designate it exclusively as a Palestinian neighbourhood that should remain "neutral" (Salamah, 2016). Thus, the social and economic integration of Palestinians into the fabric of Syrian society, while ensuring their distinct Palestinian and refugee identity, often translated into different, multiple, and even ambivalent feelings towards the two countries.

Al Hardan (2013) argues that the ways in which this refugee community was violently thrust into the war came as no surprise precisely because of the Palestinians' full-fledged social and economic integration in the country. However, when the uprisings in Syria unravelled in 2011, most Palestinians wanted to remain neutral, haunted by the memory of what happened to Palestinians in Jordan in the 1970s, Lebanon in the 1980s, Kuwait in 1991, and Iraq in the early 2000s (Batrawi, 2017).

During the first year of the current war the refugees' community declared itself "out of a pure intra-Syrian conflict" and tried to avoid any direct mass-scale involvement in one of the fighting sides (Bitari, 2013). Indeed, many of the interviewees stated that it was also due to their collective memory about the disastrous

consequences of the involvement of Palestinian refugees inside the Lebanese Civil War (1975-1990). Najem argued during our coffee meetings:

We had clearly in mind Sabra and Shatila as well as the effects of the War of Camps in Lebanon. Since the beginning of the violence in Syria, Palestinians collectively sat down: we decided that we did not want to be part of the issue: it is not our business. We do not want to interfere with internal issues. During the first years of the War there were few protests inside Yarmouk, but still we received the bombs from the government.[14]

Throughout my fieldwork, numerous Palestinians from Syria have confermed Najem's words, attesting how the tragic capitulation of Palestinian social texture and refugee camps in the aftermath the Lebanese Civil War (1975-1990) had represented a warning during the first month of uprising in Syria. However, several factors contributed to unveil the ambivalence of Palestinians in Syria and led to the devastation of Palestinian refugee camps in Syria contextually with the progressive destruction of the broader Syrian landscape. From one side, Yarmouk's strategic location as the conjunction point between the centre of Damascus and the southern rural neighbouring areas made it very tempting for all parties involved in the conflict since the beginning.

Moreover, since March 2011 numerous Palestinian young joined the first protests in Dera'a against the Syrian regime led by Bashar al-Asad. Despite their presence, these actions were staged at individual level and did not imply the presence of any Palestinian logo within the protests[15]. As such, the anti-government front was especially joint by young Palestinian guys, among whom several bloggers and video makers, who regarded the popular resentment against the regime as unavoidable element of their *Palestinianess*. For instance, this is how the blogger Tariq al-Faluji explicates his alignment against the Syrian government:

If we as a people can be comfortable with the idea that Assad can get away with the

[14] Najem (December 12, 2014). Personal interview, Bourj el-Barajneh camp.
[15] See "The Syrian Revolution and the Palestinian Refugees in Syria: Realities and risks", Al Jazeera Centre for Studies, 02/05/2012, available at: http://studies.aljazeera.net/ResourceGallery/media/Documents/2012/5/2/201252132022536734The%20Syrian%20Revolution%20and%20Palestinian%20Refugees%20in%20Syria.pdf.

murder of his people, then our 65 years under occupation have taught us nothing. Palestinians should be at the forefront of support for any people who are facing killing, forced to leave their country, and being repressed in the most brutal ways possible. The hypocrisy of a Palestinian who spends hours talking about the injustice in Israeli jails while simultaneously supporting a regime that has kept tens of thousands in much worse imprisonment conditions is astounding.[16]

At the micro-level of mobilization, such reductionist semantic binaries (i.e. Syrian versus Palestinian) proved to be useless: when many Palestinian youth from Yarmouk decided to take part in the pro-revolutionary movement, the presumed "Palestinian-ness" that originates from belonging to Yarmouk did not hinder their participation (Salamah, 2016). In this sense, Palestinians developed forms of mobilisation and/or identifications with regard to the so-called "Arab Uprisings" that transcended the link between the host state and the homeland, extending to a plurality of spaces outside of that binary (Gabiam & Fiddian-Qasmiyeh, 2015). The chant "*Wahid Wahid Wahid, Falastini wa Suri Wahid"* ("One One One! Palestinians and Syrians are One!") was one of the most recurrent all around the protests organized inside or around the Palestinian camps since the beginning of the uprising in 2011 (Salamah, 2016).

From the opposite side, the "Palestinian-ness" factor was put in place by the Syrian government in order to regain consent and avoid the involvement of the refugees' population in the protests. On the example of similar initiatives previously carried out by Arab leaders[17], Bashar al-Asad began playing the "Palestine Card" in order to regain popularity both at local and international level. In this sense, already since march 2011 and in contemporary with the first protests, the Syrian authorities started promoting a huge demonstration on Golan Heights, at the border with Israel, in order to commemorate the Palestinian *Nakba* and claim for return.

Despite several collectives were sceptical about the fear of manipulation by the authorities that had forbidden such massive demonstrations for decades, the manifestation attracted thousands of Palestinians. As a result, the Israeli Forces posted

[16] "On the Issue of Palestinian Support for the Assad Regime", Beyond Compromise, 28/04/2013, http://beyondcompromise.com/2013/04/28/on-the-issue-of-palestinian-support-for-the-assad-regime.

[17] One of the most significative episodes involved Saddam Hussein's role during the Gulf Wars.

at the border killed three guys. Followed by an even more tragic result in terms of human loss in the occasion of the Naksa (1967) commemoration, such events resulted decisive to have the whole Palestinian positions extremely polarized in respect with the current conflict. In this sense, the political factions allied with the regime were considered as the direct responsible for such deaths and were targeted by civil actors and military factions.

2.2.3 From a shelter to a desert camp

In spite of this communal disengagement, after few months any claim for neutrality was frustrated once bloody intra-Palestinian clashes occurred in Yarmouk camp, (Bitari, 2013). Any attempt of invoked impartiality has rapidly vanished after that most of the camps turned into battlefields just few months after the beginning of the clashes. Thus, following the same dramatic dynamics of the on-going Syrian civil war, the situation deteriorated in almost all the Palestinian camps starting from mid-2012. The collapse of Yarmouk camp, which had hosted not less than 150.000 Palestinians before the war and was considered the cultural and political capital of the community, became the emblem of the Palestinian tragedy and found resonance around the region and in the homeland itself. (Shaker, 2014)

Ghassan, an old Palestinian man who left the Damascus southern camp at the end of 2013, recalls:

During the first year of the war the camp stayed neutral, we as Palestinians did not side with any group. Meanwhile, the camp had welcomed hundreds of thousands of Palestinians as well as Syrians coming all over the country. This is why we were considered as traitors by the Regime.[18]

Following the same violent dynamics pervading most of the country starting from 2012, the security situation has deteriorated in almost all the camps around the country. The rapid collapse of the cultural and political capital of the refugee

[18] Interview with Ghassan (February 2015, 10) in Al-Buss camp

community became the emblem of the Palestinian tragedy and resulted to become the key-date for all the community. Yarmouk resulted definitely embedded in the popular protest movement in July 2012, when two massive demonstrations took to the streets of the camp in the aftermath of a mass execution by Syrian regime forces in the small town of Tremseh (Salamah, 2016).

Moreover, the strategic location of the camp made Yarmouk a key point for both the loyal troops and the anti-regime militias. As per the latters, the Free Syrian Army has managed to co-opt several Palestinian factions inside the camp. In this sense, the camp became a supply route for the FSA while, one after another, the regime's attempts to besiege the areas around it failed. As a result, the death toll rose dramatically – to the point that on 14th July 18 people had been killed by the regime's artillery with tens of others wounded in what came to be known as the Massacre of Jouineh Street (Salamah, 2016).

Najem's house was right behind the targeted area:

It was Ramadan, fifteen minutes before reciting the takbir[19] for the end of the fasting days. Many people were killed by the bombs: who had these huge ammunitions? Just the Syrian Army from outside the camp. These targets have continued throughout the summer, but Palestinians did not leave Yarmouk. At least until the airplanes came on December 16th.

During all the interviews held with people from Yarmouk, the narration of the conflict in the camp unavoidably ends up to focus on the MiGs[20] attack on December 16th, 2012. Such a date is destined to be impressed in the collective memory of the Palestinian community in Syria and that constitutes an unforgettable step for Palestinians' presence in Syria. Despite of their intense emotional commitment, Najem and Abed expressly wished to report their accounts with the aim not to forget such a milestone:

On that bloody day, suddenly, the air force raids bombarded the Yarmouk Camp. Hundreds of civilians were killed inside houses, mosques, schools, streets.

[19] It is the arabic phrase "Allahu akbar", usually translated as "God is the greatest". It is also heard during the adhan (call to prayer) from the minarets of mosques throughout the Muslim world.
[20] Russian-made jets regularly used by the Syrian Air Force.

It was around midday: it was the Doomsday, the Day of Judgment. As if the earth was open and people were thrown in the depth of the earth. The MiG target a precise area of the camp, but all the people were terrified because they had previous experiences of other tragedies. Children started crying, women were shouting: many of us left the camp without even taking a bag[21].

Beyond Al Basel hospital, the raids targeted four schools and a mosque, which had been partially reconverted in shelters to host thousands of Syrian people who had taken refuge in Yarmouk in the aftermath of the intensification of the fighting around Damascus. Several of the twenty-five victims – all civilians- reported by Amnesty International, were Abed's relatives:

The house of my daughter was targeted by these damned bombs: twelve members of my family went away in just few moments. After the airplanes bombed us, we started gathering the limbs from the walls of the destroyed houses. Out of the people we were in the apartment, just the youngest among my nephews survived and she currently lives with her father, who during that evil day was working outside the camp.[22]

The camp, which had hosted not less than 150.000 Palestinians before the war, has been under siege seized by Islamist factions since December 2012 after being sieged by the regime forces. The April 2015 incursion by the Islamic State was accompanied by numerous massacres against the few thousand people who had left inside the camp, which is still seized by the loyal forces. On the other hand, the Syrian regime has been accused by many Palestinians and Syrian opponents of facilitating the incursion of the Islamic State in the camp, or at least of having allowed for its supply in armament in a region locked in by its forces for months (Napolitano, 2015).

Throughout my four-year presence inside Lebanon's camps, the security situation of Yarmouk has constituted a recurrent theme during the conversations with many Palestinians of Syria. Most of them still had friends or relatives inside or immediately around the camp. According to the already mentioned Yazan:

S*ome people stayed in the camp, especially the elderly who did not want to leave their*

[21] Najem (December 2014, 12). Personal interview, Bourj el-Barajneh camp.
[22] Abed (March 2016, 10). Personal interview, Beddawi camp.

home and said: "I would rather die in my house rather than leave it". Now the camp is in the hand of Daish, but you cannot say that they are Daish Daish. Most of them do not come from abroad, but they are people who used to live in the neighbouring areas. But it will soon end, In sha'Allah[23].

The rapid collapse of the cultural and political capital of the refugee community became the emblem of the Palestinian tragedy and resulted to become the key-date for all the community. After several years of fighting storming most of the camps in the war-torn Syria, several sources from the camp and displaced worldwide have claimed the death of thousands of Palestinians[24].

2.3 From settled refugees to stateless migrants

With the same rate of Syrian citizens, more than half of the about 600.000 Palestinians in Syria are currently internal displaced due to the violence and the extension of the conflict.[25] Among the refugees who left the camps, at least 100.000 Palestinians found refuge out of Syria, getting the informal status of "double displaced" refugees. Even if the numbers were quite insignificant if compared to the millions of Syrian citizens who crossed the same borders, Palestinian refugees, who are *de facto* destitute of a State representing them in an effective way, had to face additional obstacles to flee the country. Visa policies in the region regarding Palestinian refugees are different from one country to another. However, they all share a common point: Palestinians face special treatment, different from the other refugee communities holding citizenship rights (Dorai, 2015).

In addition to the lack of an effective Palestinian State, it should also be reminded how, due to an "exclusion clause" stated both in UNHCR's Statute and in the

[23] Yazan (March 2016, 18). Personal interview, Bourj-el-Barajneh camp.
[24] Among the other, one of the most updated accurate source is the Action Group for Palestinians in Syria, a group based in London working on different levels with regards to Palestinians of Syria in terms of documenting and monitoring daily field events to their situation, and directing humanitarian appeals for them.
[25] Information included in "UNRWA Syria regional crisis response: january-december 2014". Cfr http://www.unrwa.org/resources/reports/unrwa-response-and-services-. Check all the data about Palestinians refugees and Syria crisis at http://www.unrwa.org/syria-crisis (accessed March 30, 2016)

1951 Refugee Convention (Akram and al-Azza, 2015), both in Lebanon and Syria Palestinian refugees fall within the competence of UNRWA. Therefore Palestinians from Syria, tricked under UNRWA's explicitly humanitarian and not political mandate, cannot so benefit from the *de jure* legal protection offered by UNHCR to the millions of Syrian refugees.

The absence of legal framework concerning Palestinian refugees, who are forced to leave their country of residence as well as the political treatment of the Palestinian refugees by states in the region, raises the problem of secondary migration during conflict (Dorai, 2014). Secondary migration is often analysed in the literature through the resettlement of refugees outside their area of first asylum to Europe or Northern America (Hein, 1993). Palestinian refugees tend to be transformed in asylum seekers by conflicts and considered as illegal migrants in their country of temporary residence (Dorai, 2014).

With Lebanon and Jordan being two of the largest hosts for refugees from Syria, Palestinians fleeing the conflict therefore move from one UNRWA area to another. Those displaced by the Syrian conflict, excluding Palestinians, are considered Syrian refugees, and thus are covered by UNHCR's protection and assistance mandate. Palestinian refugees from Syria, however, are recognized as 'Palestine refugees' or 'displaced persons' and therefore only covered by UNRWA in Lebanon and Jordan (Fritzsche, 2014).

Historically in the Palestinian exile the relation between non-citizenship and national identity has been peculiar, since "the lack of a strong state- indeed of any state of their own- has clearly had a great impact on the Palestinian sense of national identity" (Khalidi, 1997; 21). Therefore, since Palestinian refugees carry them a "general condition of homelessness" (Said, 1979) dated back to 1948-Nakba, the ones fleeing current war-torn Syria to Lebanon do not lose any effective citizenship status, but rather acquire the informal status of "double displaced" refugees.

In an already precarious situation like the one experienced by millions people in Syria's neighbouring countries nowadays, additional restrictions directly targeting Palestinians fleeing the same war as Syrian citizens find their origin in an international

system unable to fulfil basic protection standards in favour of already-stateless persons. The impact of this gap of legal protection has become crushing on Palestinians' daily lives, starting from borders politics in the region: their legal status mostly constraints that govern the "choice" of the country of destination. It is the combination of legal factors, depending on State policies, and also socio-spatial factors, which makes it possible to understand how the Palestinian migratory field is structured (Dorai, 2003).

Since most of the Palestinians were living in Damascus area, till 2014 few thousands tried to take refuge to Turkey through a long and dangerous route through the war-torn several checkpoints and perilous and fragmented territories. However, Turkey has taken in between 5,000 and 7,000 Palestinian refugees[26] who fled Syria and have sought refuge especially along the southern provinces and in Istanbul area. In principle, Palestinian refugees from Syria are allowed to enter Turkey without a visa since the temporary protection regime specifically ensures that Palestinians from Syria are granted the same registration and protection envisaged for Syrian nationals. In practice, even if Palestinians have a valid passport, Turkish representatives ask them for visas, although they do not require visas for Syrian nationals.[27]

Palestinians in the border regions were not allowed to enter official camps and therefore settled their own camps with the support of few organizations but without any support from the official government (Edwards, 2017). In October 2014 the Turkish government approved the temporary protection regulation through which it guaranteed protection against forced returns and assistance for all Syrians (both camp and non-camp refugees, with or without identification documents), Palestinians from Syria, and stateless. However, estimates show that out of around 10,000 Palestinians who have entered Turkey since the last few years, only 3,500 currently live in the country (Clementi, 2015). Indeed, with the "inauguration" of the mass-scale Balkan Route to Europe in 2015, the great majority of Palestinians from Syria left Turkey to Greece.

[26] There are no official or non-governmental organizations that issued statistics about the number of Palestinian refugees in Turkey, and this is due to some technical difficulties in the field such as the fact that many Palestinian refugees avoid identifying themselves as Palestinians since they might be legally pursued by the Turkish authorities.

[27] Amnesty International Report, "Turkey: Struggling to Survive: Refugees from Syria in Turkey", p.11. Available at https://www.amnesty.org/en/documents/EUR44/017/2014/en/

During the first years of the conflict when most of the refugees left Syria, before, most of the Palestinians from Syria tried to find refuge in Jordan and Lebanon. In both the counties, Palestinians from Syria cannot benefit from the assistance and the protection offered by UNHCR to the millions of Syrians who fled the country in the last four years. The impact of this clause has become crushing on Palestinians' daily lives, especially concerning borders policies in Jordan and Lebanon.

Concerning the Hashemite Kingdom, which is currently hosting around more than 600.000 Syrian refugees[28], the State authorities started denying entry to Palestinians from Syria in April 2012 and officially declared a non-admittance policy in January 2013[29]. During an interview with the pan-Arab newspaper Al-Hayat where Jordan was reaffirmed as a welcoming country for Syrian refugees, the Jordanian Prime Minister Abdallah Ensour officialised such a position in respect with the Palestinians fleeing the same conflict:

There are those who want to exempt Israel from the repercussions of displacing the Palestinians from their homes. Jordan is not a place to solve Israel's problems. Jordan has made a clear and explicit sovereign decision not to allow the crossing to Jordan by our Palestinian brothers who hold Syrian documents. Receiving those brothers is a red line because that would be a prelude to another wave of displacement, which is what the Israeli government wants. Our Palestinian brothers in Syria have the right to go back to their country of origin. They should stay in Syria until the end of the crisis[30].

Restrictions were imposed on Palestinians coming from Syria, with attempts to deport Palestinians who arrived without documents.[31] Interviewed during a research trip in Amman, the *UNRWA Regional Coordinator for the Syrian Crisis* confirmed how

[28] All the data regarding Syrian refugees in the Middle East can be found on the website of UNHCR at http://data.unhcr.org/syrianrefugees/regional.php

[29] [29] On the issue, check Human Rights Watch report: "Not welcome: Jordan's Treatment of Palestinians Escaping Syria". https://www.hrw.org/report/2014/08/07/not-welcome/jordans-treatment-palestinians-escaping-syria

[30] Jordanian PM: We can't accept Palestonian refugees from Syria", Al Monitor, 11/01/2013, disponibile all'indirizzo: http://www.al-monitor.com/pulse/ar/politics/2013/01/jordanian-pm-we-cannot-receive-palestinian-refugees-from-syria.html. L'articolo originale (in arabo) è disponibile all'indirizzo: http://alhayat.com/Details/470960.

[31] See a detailed Syrian refugees' restriction timeline available at:http://newirin.irinnews.org/syrian-refugees-restrictions-timeline/

these practices were de facto active since 2012: we recorded at least 111 Palestinians victims of *refoulement* to Syria. UNRWA tried to mobilize the attention of international community but it's not working"[32]. Particularly acute consequences for the many mixed Palestinian- Syrian and Palestinian-Jordanian families, as they are separated, with the non-Palestinian spouse entitled to remain while the Palestinian spouse is not[33].

The lack of formal legal protection of Palestinian refugees transforms them de facto into illegal migrants subject to potential *refoulement* towards Syria (Dorai, 2015). Once Yarmouk, as well as many other camps, finally collapsed and was voided of its inhabitants between 2012 and 2013, Jordanian border had been closed and the way to Turkey resulted logistically complicated. As such, Lebanon roughly became the only one Syria's neighbouring country where to find refuge.

Moreover, among the several reasons why Palestinian refugees from Syria flew to Lebanon, Meier (2015) underlines their concentration in Damascus neighbourhood [which is close to Lebanon], kinship, intermarriages and labour ties. Especially during the first years of fieldwork in the northern camps of Nahr el-Bared and Beddawi, I have witnessed numerous gatherings among Palestinians from Syria and from Lebanon who had lived together during the past decades. Among the others, Mahmoud – a Palestinian man from Lebanon with whom I spent several weeks during my staying in Beddawi, reminds how: "In the past, all my relatives used to go to Syria during holiday, we had a lot of good friends in Yarmouk. I also lived there for five years before the beginning of the Lebanese civil war"[34]. Such as per the Syrian workforce presence in Lebanon before 2011, the linkages and relationship previously established with the Palestinian communities beyond the national borders turned into a social and cultural resource in the aftermath of the Syrian breakdown.

2.4 Lebanon: the cumulative multiplication of borders

2.4.1 External and internal excluding policies

[32] Interview with Lisa Gilliam, Amman, 30/12/2014.
[33] International communities' response to the world's largest refugee crisis", April 2014, Middle East Monitor.https://www.middleeastmonitor.com/downloads/reports/20140408_InternationalCommunitiesResponse_ web-1.pdf.
[34] Mahmoud (October 2016, 2). Personal interview, Beddawi camp.

Among the five crossing points located on the Lebanese-Syrian border, the one in Masna'a- Al Jdeidah at the eastern art of Lebanon, 60 kilometres from Damascus and 110 kilometres from Beirut, constitutes the main corridor that connects the Lebanese and Syrian capitals. In the first half of 2013 about 6.000 Palestinians were crossing Masna'a border monthly: the overall number rose to 66.000 in July of the same year[35]. Despite Palestinians constituted a numerically marginal part of the overall people who left Syrian during that period, national and international authorities revealed inadequate in respect with such patterns of secondary migration. This is the situation as described by Khaled, a young guy from Yarmouk who crossed the border around the end of January 2013:

At the border control there is a specific corridor for non-Syrian citizens: most of them are Palestinians from Syria. At the beginning of the crisis UNRWA used to monitor the area and support the refugees with some monetary support: when I crossed it was 200 dollars. I left Syria with my family and directly came to Beirut, but some of my friends realized that they could make out some business out of that. Therefore, after crossing to Lebanon, they were back to Syria the day after and back again to Lebanon after few hours. In one day they earned around 400 dollars, much more than a monthly salary![36].

Although Palestinians represented a very small proportion of the total number of refugees entering the country[37], the Lebanese authorities issued new and cumulative arbitrary entry policies on the entry of Palestinians from Syria.[38]. Arbitrary and cumulative restrictions on the entry of Palestinians from Syria were imposed till May 2014, when these procedures were made formalized after that on 3rd May the General Security at Beirut airport arrested around hundred people accused of owning fake documents. Among them, 41 people were Palestinians of Syria who were trying to reach

[35] From an Interview with the UNRWA *Pubblic Information Officer*, Zizette Darkazally (07/11/2014), *Beirut*

[36] Khaled (December 2015, 12). Personal interview, Bourj el-Barajneh camp.

[37] Although numbers are extremely volatile due to gaps in the registration system as well as the huge rate of transnational mobility among the refugees, more than one million Syrian refugees have been registered by UNHCR in Lebanon since 2014. As per the last update held at 31/01/16, 1,07,785 Syrian are registered in the country as refugees. All the data regarding Syrian refugees in the Middle East can be found on the website of UNHCR at http://data.unhcr.org/syrianrefugees/regional.php (last access on January 31, 2016)

[38] According to a survey carried by UNRWA in July 2014

Egypt and Libya[39]. Interviewed on the issue after few months, the UNRWA Public Information Officer in Beirut revealed:

While the Syrians were sent back to their houses, they put the Palestinians into a bus and sent them directly to Syria and de facto closed the borders for Palestinians. Nouhad Machnouk, the Lebanese Ministry of Interior, issued a statement saying that what had happened was not an isolated case and now on they're going to start taking it more seriously. As a result, they put a list of conditions of who can come to the border and stopped the automatic visa they used to give to everybody crossing the border. They started imposing restrictions about who leaves and who enters in particular. [40]

Since that moment, fewer and fewer Palestinians have tried to cross the border: just the ones who have a valid ticket and visa for a third-country are legitimate to enter Lebanon through a 11-hour transit permit barely enough to reach Beirut airport. In spite of several negotiations with the Lebanese authorities, UNRWA's limited Mandate does not entitle the Agency to fully operate as a protection unity. Interviewed on the issue in October 2016, the UNRWA field protection officer in Lebanon revealed me as the Agency had recently individuated a border movement officer entitled to monitor the movements in the border crossing areas between Lebanon and Syria both in Masna'a and in two other points in the north of the country.

However, excluding policies do not actually run out once crossed the borders: Palestinians from Syria in Lebanon have to deal with further obstacles as regards their legal permanence in the country. Beyond the previously mentioned issue of UNRWA's gaps in legal protection, the current situation cannot be fully understood without attesting how in the new context Palestinians from Syria inherit the "special" system implemented for the about 300.000 Palestinians living in Lebanon since 1948 (Meier, 2015). Hereby, the newcomers become integral part of the long-term problematic relation between the host State and the Palestinian community, with the refusal of the settlement of the Palestinian refugees almost unanimously endorsed by Lebanese

[39] See the report issued by Amnesty International on the issue. "Denied Refuge: Palestinians from Syria Seeking Safety in Lebanon"(2014). http://www.amnesty.nl/sites/default/files/public/mde180022014en_1.pdf (accessed March 30, 2015).
[40] Interview with Zizette Darkazally (14/11/2014). Beirut

politicians (Dorai, 2015). Local authorities justify this policy with the desire to limit the "risk" of settlement of unregistered Palestinians in Lebanon and preserve their right of return.

Throughout my fieldwork I witnessed numerous unpleasant episodes specifically targeting the Palestinians from Syria recently resettled in Lebanon. When in May and in September 2014 the General Security summoned them all in order to deal with the renewal of their residency permit, hundreds of them were ordered to leave the country within 14 days without any further justification. Concerning the last appointment, Zizette Darkazally confirms the version already stated by several refugees I had met out of Tripoli General Security offices during that day:

On the 25th September General Security issued another decision calling all the Palestinians to come to their office to regularize their staying and they will be giving 3 months for one time only. We tried to monitor this appointment and there were very few cases of people receiving a 3 months visa; even those who received, it took them long time. Usually when they go there the General Security takes the documents saying " Come back in one month or two: someone got the visa and someone is still waiting for the visa[41].

The residency permit quarrel has been even more obscure and worked, on small numbers, as a sort of premonition of the "general" case regarding their Syrian fellows. The political goal of these measures was to limit as much as possible the long-term settlement of Palestinian refugees from Syria in Lebanon, allowing only short stays without any access to specific rights in Lebanon, such as access to the labour market, education or health system. Even before I started my fieldwork in June 2014, almost all the Palestinians from Syria had to deal with further obstacles as regards their legal permanence in the country. Also due to arbitrary national policies intertwined with regular misunderstandings between the government and UNRWA, more than 80% of the Palestinians are currently staying in Lebanon without legal valid papers[42].

[41] Private interview with Zizette Darkazally (14/11/2014). UNRWA HQ, Beirut.
[42] These numbers collected during my fieldwork were later confirmed by an overall survey conducted by UNRWA in 2015. See "Chaaban, J., Salti, N., Ghattas, H., Irani, A., Ismail, T., Batlouni, L. (2016), "Survey on the Socioeconomic Status of Palestine Refugees in Lebanon 2015", Report published by the

As Mahmoud, a Palestinian young guy who works for an international organization based in Beirut, confirms:

You have restrictions on movement because they may be arrested if they pass through checkpoints around Lebanon or the ones nearby the camps. They are illegal so that basically they can be detained and arrested. The authorities are not deporting people, so that they release them after being detained with a stamp ordering they have to leave the country within a certain amount of time[43].

2.4.2 "Go Home: it is better for you"

Just around September 2016, after several years of negotiations involving several stakeholders, UNRWA finally announced the emanation of new regulations concerning the residency permit of the newcomers from Syria. Interviewed on the issue just few days after this decision, Matteo Benatti- UNRWA field protection officer- revealed that, according to a new disposition released by the Lebanese General Security, a one-year renewal of the residency permit should have been free of charge for all the Palestinians of Syria who were regularly on the Lebanese territory at that time.

Once this one-year extension is expired, refugees are expected to pay the regular fee: therefore, UNRWA expects a further increase of problems related to the regularization of documents since July 2017. At the same time, in spite of the new dispositions, right in these days we have been facing several discrepancies related to the application of this new regulation and several families were not granted the extension for free.[44]

Due to these arbitrary policies, more than 80% of the Palestinians interviewed during my fieldwork were living in Lebanon without any legal paper at the end of 2014. A Palestinian woman who entered Lebanon at the end of 2012 stated how uncertainty of legal status constitutes the most urgent issue:

American University of Beirut (AUB) and the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA)."

[43] Mahmoud (October 2016, 13). Personal interview, Nahr el-Bared Camp.

[44] Interview with Matteo Benatti, UNRWA field protection officer. Beirut, 27/10/2016

My Visa is expired and I do not know what to do. I have just come back from the General Security office. They told me: 'Go home: it's better for you' and they gave me a 15-days permit. After that, I should come back to Syria. But I will never do it. I will stay inside the camp in order to avoid any problem.[45]

Many Palestinians denounce hence the consequent reduction of their freedom of movement through new physical borders and legal boundaries, recalling how "while being created with the original scope to enclose people within the safety of familiar territory, borders and barriers can also become prisons, and are often defended beyond reason or necessity". (Said, 1984: 185).

According to a survey carried out by the United Nations Work and Relief Agency for Palestinian Refugees in the Middle East (UNRWA), not more than 31.500 Palestinians from Syria were residing in Lebanon in June 2016[46]. Beyond the around 44.000 who were formerly registered in the country in July 2014, we should also include in the statistic the new Palestinian-Syrian children who were born in Lebanon during last years.

Moreover, these new-born children without legal visa cannot be registered and don't have any legal documentation, which turns out to be very problematic. It generates a lot of *sans-papiers* generations who formally do no exist. Always according to Benatti: "It is a really problematic situation because we estimate there are about 1200 births per year. UNRWA records the births we know about even if it's not official in Lebanon; we record them on UN records so that hopefully when the war is over they can go back to Syria[47]".

Assumed the tidy rejection of the discriminatory system implemented in Lebanon, the majority of the Palestinian refugees coming from Syria considerer a further emigration as the only practicable solution for their future days. This tendency to emigration is also by attested recent data collected in the country: over about 64.000

[45] Nour (December 2014, 14). Personal interview, Nahr el-Bared camp.
[46] The numbers provided by UNRWA might not be accurate since Palestinians from Syria living outside the camps are not easily individuated by the organization due to evident logistic obstacles and failures in communication.
[47] Interview with Matteo Benatti, UNRWA field protection officer. Beirut, 27/10/2016

Palestinians from Syria registered as fled into Lebanon until borders were open, a household survey conducted by UNRWA in August 2014 stated that more than one-third had already left the country. As mentioned before, an updated census conducted in summer 2016 by UNRWA is supposed to reveal how the presences have decreased up to 31.500 persons. If these data were confirmed, it would mean that, taking also in considering the natural growth factor, about half of the Palestinians of Syria have already fled Lebanon[48].

Emigration became an objective for many refugees, because it made possible an escape from a situation perceived as insoluble by most refugees, an alternative solution to an increasingly improbable return to their homeland, or to a durable settlement in Lebanon in an increasingly hostile context. Among the around 11.000 Palestinians of Syria who left Lebanon during 2016, the great majority tried the way to Europe. However, according to the statistics collected by the UNRWA Border Monitor Officer, more than 1.000 Palestinians decided to settle back to Syria[49]. In their case, the notion of return assumes a further significance along the collective Palestinians' displacement from an Host State. Reconnecting the concept of Double Nakba with the one of Double Return.

2.5 Catastrophe(s) and return(s)

As long as the border was not closed for them, many Palestinians went back and forth between Lebanon and Syria according to the evolution of the political and security situation in the camps and / or cities where they habitually resided in Syria (Dorai, 2015). This was the case of Fatma, a Palestinian girl from Syria already mentioned at the beginning of this chapter when she left Yarmouk in company with her Lebanese mother. This last element constituted a vital resource along her life:

[48] Additional data are also collected by Action Group for Palestinians in Syria, a group based in London working on different levels with regards to Palestinians of Syria in terms of documenting and monitoring daily field events to their situation, and directing humanitarian appeals for them. http://www.actionpal.org.uk/en/post/2625/death-reveals-another-kind-of-palestinian-syrians-suffering-in-lebanon#sthash.j2WNdNNT.dpuf

[49] Just in the second half of 2016 UNRWA hired a Border Monitor Officer, who was charged to track Palestinians' movements between Syria and Lebanon. The questionnaire submitted to the returnees had to be modified according to GAPAR preventive check.

The first time I went back to Syria, it was at the end of 2012 to submit my last exam at the University in Damascus. Along those days there was a huge explosion and therefore the session was postponed. Just after one month I went back again in order to finalize my exam and get my diploma, which I finally got after five years of courses. Next time was the last one. Later on I went back to undergo an eye operation. It was September 2013 and the situation was very tense: from Masna'a border to Damascus we met 17 checkpoints managed by the Syrian Army. Before the war it took me two hours from Beirut airport to my place: now you are lucky if it takes you less than five. It is up to the situation at the border and to the checkpoints. I am too scared to go back as far as there is still war in Syria. [50]

After the new dispositions implemented since May 2014, fewer and fewer Palestinians approach the official border crossings along both the directions. However, throughout my fieldwork I witnessed how the movements at the border evolved with the evolution of the security situation and the progressive affirmation of the Syria government in the conflict. Along this battle, Yarmouk stood as the last ISIS stronghold before its capitulation in May 2018.

In this regards, my participation inside the Bourj-el-Barajneh football arena allowed me to know numerous Palestinians of Syria who had created their own informal team named "Yarmouk Team" with whom I used to train once per week. For most of the players this informal gathering used to go far beyond the hour and half dedicated to football: after the training we used to meet inside the "Generation of Return Field" for sharing some coffee.

During numerous of these meetings these young guys, who knew each others since Yarmouk times, used to discuss and update each other about the security situation in the camp. Among them, Ibrahim was unavoidably considered as one of the most authoritative ones since he used to go back and forth from Damascus each two weeks. While working as a barber in Bourj el-Barajneh, his occupation in Syria was quite more engaged on the military and security field.

[50] Fatma (March 2015, 3). Personal interview, Bourj el-Barajneh camp

I was a member of the Palestinian Liberation Army before the war. After accomplishing my military duty, I left to Lebanon at the end of 2012 in order to avoid being summoned on the front. I moved alone, since all my family members stayed in Syria: they left Yarmouk and moved to Damascus after December 2012 bombings. I have never loved the regime, but after Daish occupied the camp I could not stay and look anymore: that was our home! Since 2015, I go back and forth to support some Palestinian militias that are fighting alongside the loyal troops. We monitor the situation at the edge of the camp and we look forward to kick them out from our home[51].

In September 2017 Ibrahim decided to definitely resettle to Syria after his parents were dead few days one after the other: he rent a place to Damascus and opened a barber shop. Beyond frequent updates through the Whatsapp chat of the team, it was Yazan, one of my teammates both in Yarmouk Team and within al-Aqsa Club, who reported such news after meeting Ibrahim in Damascus. I have frequently asked Yazan how they could usually go back and forth from Syria despite the hard restrictions imposed on Palestinians' entry to Lebanon. Such as per Ibrahim's situation, it was their affiliation with the Palestinian militias that revealed decisive to allow their movements between Lebanon and Syria. Beyond running a cafè and working as a football trainer, every night Yazan works within the Palestinian Army inside Bourj el-Barajneh camp. While his military occupation in Lebanon do not have any connections with the reasons of his travels to Syria, it entitles him to travel between the two countries:

Since I left Yarmouk in 2011, I regularly go back and forth every three weeks. My whole family is in Syria, when I go back I usually stay at my uncle's place in Damascus. Last years I could spend even one year without going back to Syria, but in 2016 I got engaged and I need to go back at least each 2 months. I am going to get married in few months. Moreover, now the road to Damascus is safe and fast: you go back and forth without any problem. There are no problems anymore. During the battles in Ghouta we were afraid that problems could come to Damascus once more, but nothing happened at the end. The checkpoints are still there, but you normally move, I just show my documents and go forward. Moreover, my military card allows me to freely move

[51] Ibrahim (June 2016, 3). Personal interview, Bourj el-Barajneh.

between the borders. I do not pass by the normal border crossings at Masna'a, but we use another road: "al-tareeq askari" (the military road). I just enter by showing my identity card: on the border there is a parking spot for the Lebanese Army. They just check out your document on the computer and you are allowed to pass. Even on the opposite side it is the same: you just show them your military card, wait in the parking and enter back to Lebanon[52].

During my talks with Yazan, Ibrahim and many other Palestinians from Yarmouk, the narratives of the tragedy suffered in Syria result to be deeply consequent to their attachment with the host State. As such, in-between spaces such as Yarmouk camp became salient to broader conceptions of Palestinian identity and activism because Palestinian- ness is shaped not only through attachment to place, but also through particular experiences that are associated with Palestinian identity (Gabiam & Fiddian-Qasmiyeh, 2015). In this sense, after being collectively evicted from Palestine in 1948, the double collective Nakba materializes with the forced displacement from their second home. As the "first" Palestinian catastrophe finds its unavoidable antidote with the mantra of return, I have been wondering to which extent a future perspective of return to Syria after the conflict may interact with the return to Palestine.

These experiences, even when they are not personally lived, are felt viscerally, in that they speak to understandings of Palestinian suffering and capture a collective sense of injustice felt by Palestinians (Gabiam & Fiddian-Qasmiyeh, 2015). Once more, it is Yazan during a dialogue with his fellows Rami and Louay who elaborates on such an apparent dichotomy. Questioned on this dimension of double return evoked by numerous Palestinians of Syria interviewed during my fieldwork, Yazan attests:

For sure: any Palestinian from Syria now talks about two different returns. For sure, our root is Palestinian-Syrian: my right to return is to Palestine, but we cannot forget that we were born in Syria, raised and studied there. 'Fi shi ismou watan, fi shi ismou beit' (there is something called homeland, there is something called home). For sure, you have something that you call homeland, Palestine. But then you have Syria, and you cannot forget it. We raised, ate and drank the whole life in Syria: it is a second

[52] Yazan (November 2017, 19). Personal interview, Bourj-el-Barajneh camp

homeland ("watan teni"). But now we find each other out of both our homelands. For instance, here in Lebanon Palestinians must pay for everything, while in Syria everything was free. We used to go from Damascus without carrying out your identity card. Here you cannot even go out of the camp without documents. Now for sure in Syria it is another situation but still (...) Our return is to Palestine, but immediately after that we have the one to Syria. But for sure no one wants to stay here in Lebanon".[53]

In the Lebanese context the strong collective identity has been deeply affected by the lack of citizenship and basic rights and due to the absence of a Palestinian state. These aspects thus contribute to arouse "a disjuncture between the places in which they feel rooted and the places where they currently reside" (Holt, 2014: 99). As a consequence, this contrast gives life to myriads of daily practices where the affiliation, the obligation, the authority and the feelings have to be flexible (Khalidi et. Riskedahl, 2010).

With the flow of thousands Palestinians coming from the war-torn Syria, the gap between an official narration and the daily practices is further expanding, causing consequences unexpected just few years ago. Once the trajectories of the newcomers intersect with a daily life grounded on negation of rights and lack of perspectives, the collision generates several and new reactions worth being explored. Nowadays, the overlapping of discrimination and disillusion has rapidly developed in an absolute rejection of the current ordinary, with the second exile in an unwelcoming country working as a challenge towards refugees' fundamental certainties grounded in decades of exile in Syria.

Consequently, the catastrophe faced during the last years so that questions the whole experience as Palestinian refugees in the Middle East. In this way, even the 1948-Nakba has been revised at the light of the Syrian civil war, generating several recalls and comparisons between the two catastrophes. The oldest refugees interviewed during my fieldwork frequently repeated that the current Nakba is even worse than the one faced by the Palestinian society during the expulsion from the homeland. This old man, forced to flee Yarmouk camp in Syria sixty-four years later having left Haifa in 1948,

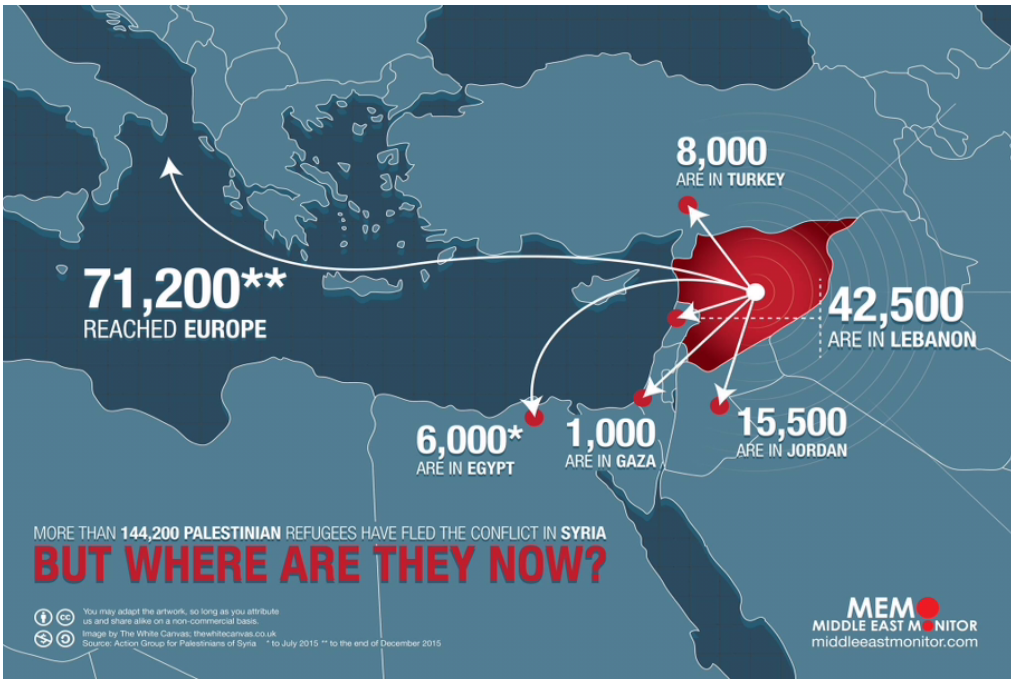
[53] Yazan (April 4, 2018). Personal interview, Bourj el-Barajneh camp.

stated: “While in 1948 the we left together and met a generous welcoming, now we are on our own[54]”

Despite the new exodus from Syria does not put the cultural and political Palestinian identity at stake, refugees’ reflections witness a further split between a collective narration and an individual one, with the latter shifting in an on-going process of reformulation according to the current ordinariness. In this way, ordinariness cannot be perceived as a capitulation of the Palestinian political identity and the loss of national values (Achilli, 2015: 15), but rather a consequence of a factual and unexpected condition permeated with deep vulnerability and discriminations. Even the cornerstone of a collective Palestinian identity is challenged by the uncertainties of the current situation: despite being still attached to the national identity and the right to return, they seem having lost any concrete hope to realize it.

Questioned about future perspectives, a Palestinian woman met in Shatila revealed: “If I could choose, I would leave tomorrow for Palestine. But we don’t have any hope about it. At least for Sweden, we can have a small chance.”[55] On the same way, her husband reaffirms: “I have always dreamt of coming back there, but in order to leave Lebanon I am ready to emigrate to Somalia”[56]. These statements contest the rhetoric of the return to Palestine as the only one feasible solution to their status as well as reaffirm how accommodation in Lebanese camps is far away from their current imagined landscape.

[54] Zaher (November 2014, 20). Personal interview, Beddawi camp.
[55] Nisrine (November 2014, 7). Personal interview, Shatila camp.
[56] Boudy (October 2014, 17). Personal interview, Bourj el-Barajneh camp.



Map 1 The displacement of the Palestinians from Syria. (Source: Middle East Monitor)

2.6 " Our Palestine *now is Europe"*

We may assume that the trajectory of Palestinians refugees from Syria is not peculiar since similar experiences are shared by almost one million of persons who left war-torn Syria in the last five years and tried to find sanctuary in Europe. Their peculiarity is rather grounded on the previous experience of square refugees trying one more time to find a new host State after being consecutively compelled to leave Palestine, Syria and Lebanon. In this way, the current exile from Syria affects the individual and collective experience as Palestinians refugees in the Middle East. While talking about the current migration routes of many friends with the attempt to localize their trajectories on a map, a man on his forties sadly commented: "You see? In the past just Palestinians in Lebanon were emigrating towards Europe: none of us in Yarmouk could imagine leaving Syria at that time: now it is our turn".[57]

He recalls the massive emigration of Palestinians from Lebanon during and after the Lebanese civil war: at that time, without questioning the right of return, further emigration was conceived as a chance to access some rights, as work, social care and education (Dorai et Hanafi, 2006). "Instability and spatial mobility may then be actually

[57] Bassem (Febryary 2015, 21). Personal interview, Ei nel Hilweh camp.

regarded as two major aspects of Palestinian life in Lebanon" (Dorai, 2010; 13).

During my fieldwork, Palestinians from Syria attested that the same dynamics mentioned above put at stake their perceptions and threatening the certainties elaborated during decades of exile. Therefore the recurrent *mantra* of return to Palestine as the only solution to their exile is deeply questioned by a chance of emigration they had never even imagined before. Along this perspective, this chapter tries to qualitatively grasp "ambiguities and contradictions related to their nationalist allegiance that refugees have to face when they are called upon to confront the inconsistencies of daily life, exposing the limitations of an approach that is too reliant on resistance studies" (Achilli, 2015: 4). In this way, everyday acts in the form of ordinary people's expressions and practices may contribute to revive analytic utility in the realm of the anthropological imagination.

Numerous people met throughout my research express how they are reshaping the trajectory of their own life, interpreting it once again through the borders, to be intended as arbitrary constructions but also evocative mental ones in the building of 'otherness' (Meier, 2013). In front of a recent border spectacle subordinated to a discourse of security, order and interdiction (De Genova, Mezzadra, Pickles, 2014), refugees are acting as political actors chasing this trend and trying to overcome physical obstacles. Thus, migrants and refugees decentralize the international order, shaking the principle of territoriality (Badie and Smouts, *1996*) with the emergence of interacting territorialities and transnational and translocal connections.

We do not claim great slogans anymore- says a former English teacher coming from Yarmouk- We just need to live a decent life: we are looking for peace, security, health care and a house where to sleep. As myself, I encourage emigration: my wife and three my children went to Europe last year by crossing the sea from Egypt[58].

In the Palestinian case, it is legal status constraints that govern the "choice" of the country of destination. It is thus the combination of legal factors, depending on State policies, and also socio-spatial factors, which makes it possible to understand how the

[58] Ahmed (December 2014, 2). Personal interview, Bourj el-Barajneh camp.

Palestinian migratory field is structured from Lebanon towards Europe, and its current geographical reconstruction.

Even the current European Union's closed borders policies seem not preventing Palestinian refugees from reaching their aim: before the opening of the "Balkan route" in 2015, the prevalent inevitably option passed through *ṭarīq al-mawt* (the death road), as people refer to the dangerous crossing of the Mediterranean Sea. Because of their statelessness, Palestinians from Syria faced additional obstacles in obtaining a visa for any African country from where to begin the route toward the southern Mediterranean coast.

Being Sudan one of the few countries granting them a "legal way-out", thousands of Palestinians of Syria have thus flied from Lebanon to Sudan since 2012, thanks to a Visa obtained at the Sudanese Embassy in Beirut. "One of my sons is now in Sudan, waiting for going to Libya and then crossing the sea to Italy" says an old man coming from Yarmouk. "It's dangerous, but here there's no way to live. As soon as I collect the money, I'll also leave to Sudan: I've already obtained the Visa at the embassy." [59] Therefore the transnational connections generated by these movements are nowadays being reinterpreted as a key for appropriating a more dignified life.

The dangers along the route do not seem like preventing refugees from giving up, and the testimonies by the former camp dwellers that have already reached Europe constitute a further stimulus. As stated by a man in his forty met in Bourj el-Barajneh camp:

"When we were in Yarmouk, no one could imagine leaving Syria. Now we are just looking for a way to leave Lebanon, either by sea or by desert. We want to save our children. When our friends reach Europe, they are used to sending pictures: in that moment, we feel like born again. We see a light at the end of our nightmares. Our brothers and friends who are currently in Sweden and Germany says that, while the Middle East is the Holy Land where the Quran and the Bible were written, the outcomes of what is written in these Books happen in Europe. Our Palestine now is Europe." [60]

[59] Raed (November 2014, 14). Personal interview, Beddawi camp.
[60] Najem (December 2014, 18). Personal interview, Bourj el-Barajneh camp.

2.7 Beirut- 25th July 2017

After the partial interruption of the Balkan route and the contemporary further restriction on Visa for Syria's refugees, people did not stop fleeing the region. Among them, one of my teammates tried to reach Europe during summer 2017. Such events deeply impact on my presence in Lebanon, and raised several ethical interrogatives around my position as outsider researcher who turns out to become a privileged teammate and – first of all- friend. I chose to entirely report the personal reflections in Italian shared on my Facebook account on the day of our respective departure to Europe. English follows.

Tra poche ore io e un amico
lasciamo Beirut -via Istanbul- per l'Italia.
Sarò a Milano domani verso pranzo,

Louay dovrebbe arrivarci tra domenica e lunedì.
Il mio biglietto é costato 200 euro,
Il suo 25 volte tanto: dopo Istanbul sarà la volta della Libia e dopo ancora quella del mare.
Abbiamo giocato l'ultima partita insieme domenica sera, l'ultima vittoria dopo 2 anni di zappate e tunnel nei peggiori campi di Beirut e dintorni.
Non conto più le partite che Louay vince da solo. Diverse volte gli ho detto:
"se fossi nato a Brescia, io ora andrei in giro con la tua maglietta".
Invece Louay é palestinese, nato e cresciuto In Siria, tra le vie del campo di Yarmouk ora occupato dall'Isis, e ancora prima assediato e ridotto a macerie e brandelli umani da quel macellaio "baluardo contro l'integralismo".
E proprio da quelle macerie Louay é scappato alla fine del 2012 verso Beirut, per non dover decidere se finire in fossa o in divisa ad ammazzare fratelli e amici.

Non voglio vedere un altro amico crepare in mare, cosí come dall'alto dei miei 9000 metri di comoda altitudine non sono nella posizione per scoraggiare alcun tipo di viaggio.

" Mi hanno detto che se arrivo sabato in Libia mi fanno imbarcare subito. Lo sappiamo che nessuno ci garantisce di arrivarci in Italia. Ma che posso fare dopo 5 anni di tentativi a vuoto?"

"Aspetta che provo a sentire l'ambasciata".
Che mi risponde rapidamente, dicendomi che "per i cittadini siriani, specialmente quelli di origine palestinese è quasi impossibile ottenere il visto. Sono quasi tutti rifiutati."

Buon viaggio allora, e che Dio, Maradona o quel Baggio di cui spesso ci riempiamo gli occhi te la mandi buona.

*A noi non rimane che mangiare la m****, avvolti in un sistema istituzionalizzato per cui o sei un "finito rifugiato" da reimpatriare o un "vero rifugiato" magari morto in mare.*

***

In a few hours, my friend and I are leaving Beirut- via Istanbul- in order to reach Italy. Tomorrow I will be in Milan around lunchtime, while Louay should arrive between Sunday and Monday.

My ticket cost 200 euro, his one 25 five times more:

after Istanbul his road passes by Libya and later on through the sea.

We played our last match together last Sunday Night, the last win after two years of rude tackles and nutmegs in the worst football field in Beirut and around. I do not count anymore the matches that Louay won on his own: " If you were born in Brescia, I would currently the jersey with your name- I tell him quite often.

Rather, Louay is Palestinian, born and raised in Syria, among the streets of that Yarmouk Camp that is currently occupied by ISIS, and much before was sieged and reduced to ruins and human shreds. And right from those ruins that Louay fled at the end of 2012 to Beirut, in order not to compelled to decide whether end in a grave or killed brothers and friend.

I do not want to see another friend of mine dying into the sea, as standing from my 9000 meters of comfortable altitude I am not in the right position to discourage any king of travel.

"I was told that if I arrive this Saturday in Libya, they will take me on board immediately. We know that no one assures that we will safely arrive to Italy. But what can I do after five attempts in vein?"

"Just wait for a second that I try to contact my embassy" I tell him.

And the embassy rapidly answers, and says that "as regards the Syrian citizens, and especially the ones with Palestinian origins, is almost impossible to obtain the Visa. They are almost all denied".

Therefore, have a safe travel. And I hope that God, Maradona or that Baggio we often speak about will be with you.

As per us, we do not have anything else to do than eating shit, invaded inside an institutionalized system for which either you are a "false refugee" to be repatriated or a "true refugee" who may die into the sea.

2.8. "No Country accepts you"

Louay has never reached Italy, as well as he has never landed to Libya. Nothing worked according to his plans. After I was back to Lebanon, we have met again and played one more year together. Here is how he narrated his travel experience as recorded during the interview for "Footballization" documentary. He decided to show his own face and declare his own identity with the motivation: "I want to reveal everything that happened to me. I am not afraid anymore: what can happen to me more than what already happened?" I guess his words are more worthy and significant than the whole chapter.

Out of the blue I though to leave Lebanon. In order to go to Europe, not back to Syria of course. Before planning my trip, I wanted to pass by Syria in order to reach Turkey by land. But in Syria you always know a way to check if your return may be safe. Therefore, a friend told me: "Do not pass by Syria, you are called up for the Army. As soon as you enter the border they will catch you. For that reason I decided to take a place to reach Turkey. I previously had to go to Turkey, and then directly to Libya. But here is the problem: When I left from here I had a Visa from Libya.

So as soon as I arrived at Ataturk airport in Istanbul, they told me: "you do not have any valid visa to go to Libya." I had bought a Visa from a smuggler who was based in Sudan: he gave me a sort of working visa that they use to hire employees abroad. After reaching Mitiga airport, I was supposed to go forward to Italy through the sea. When I left to Turkey I had a regular Visa for Libya, otherwise I would not have been allowed to leave Beirut airport. I regularly landed in Ataturk airport and I had to wait around 24 hours before the next flight to Libya. But when I approached the right gate I was stopped and there my drama started.

Since that moment, I spent 25 days in the airport. It was not a real jail, but I was stuck at the transit area. Nothing worked as it was supposed to do: everything seemed to me like paranormal. I have spent 25 days in the transit area waiting for news, but the time limit to leave the transit area was just four days. After that moment, I was not able to leave back the transit area anymore. But after all these days without a perspective, I

wanted to go our, live and breath some air. It is not human such a life. Inside the airport I was introduced to a smuggler who offered me a German passport to leave the airport. The guy on the picture somehow looked like me: he asked me 2.000$ for that. I have never met the smuggler personally: our conversations were by phone. He had such powerful connections inside the airport that I found that passport directly inside the toilet of the transit area. We agreed I would have paid the 2.000$ just once I had left the airport. But when I arrived at the passport control, something went wrong, the alarm start screaming and the police caught me and put into the jail for one day.

Therefore, they decided to repatriate me back to Lebanon, where at the same time I was not entitled to enter because all my documents were expired since long time. So after being repatriated to Lebanon, I was immediately sent back to Turkey: as a cargo, I spent 48 hours over the sky! Neither at Rafik Hariri airport in Beirut nor in Istanbul I was allowed to leave the airport. At the end I told them: "What should I do?"

The problem is that I am a Palestinian-Syrian: here it what means being Palestinian from Syria. It means that you do not have any homeland. You do not have even a country where you can be sent back. Your biggest problem is related to your freedom: your world and your freedom keep on restricting and getting smaller and smaller. You do not even have a homeland where to go back, a place that you feel as yours. After I was sent back to Turkey for the second time, I told them: "Any country in the world, just send

me to any country that accepts me. But let me go away from this jail of the airport, let me breath air. Just after two hours, an employee came to me and said: "no country in the world accepts you". No one! There is not place in the world where I can go! Something like a country that supports you and with which you can have hope and do not feel afraid. Once I was sent back to Lebanon for the last time, they repeated the same words. I do not have any real documents, mine is not a passport but a travel document: you cannot do anything with that!

Once I asked them any solution, they told me: "the only solution is that you go back to Syria." But you know what is going on in Syria: the atmosphere is dramatic, you cannot live there. The only person who really helped me was an employee inside Beirut airport. He let me buy a card for my phone with which I contacted my friends and relatives. At the end I spoke with several officials inside the airport and he told to

cross the border with Syria and then: "Do what you have to do: be careful".He knew which kind of atmosphere we have in Syria, and what means being repatriated to Syria if you are a 27-year old guy. You are immediately caught and sent to the Army. In Syria you do not have alternative: either you stay with the regime or with the opposition. But I did not want to put myself inside such a situation made up of arms and blood.

Therefore, after I reached the border area with Syria and officially get an exit Visa from Lebanon, I managed to cross the border back to Lebanon. Thanks to some friends, I contacted some smugglers who organize such crossings during night. It was jut a 1 kilometer mountain trail but it took us more than 6 hours: we left at 11 pm and arrived at 5 in the morning. The road is very impervious and you must frequently stop on the way: there are children and women, and you must go all together. I paid 100$ to be smuggled back to Lebanon: it is not too much, if you consider the 2000$ for a German passport I have never used in my life.

My only desire would be the one to have a homeland. Is there anything more complicated than that? This is only what Palestinians desire in the world. You simply want a homeland, a place where if anything happens you can go back. You see, when they told me "no country accepts you", it is very hard. No country accepts you! What did I do wrong? Am I not human?

Let me tell you the last thing: few months ago I was coming to the football training here in Bourj el-Barajneh. Once we reached the checkpoint, I was asked to show my documents. My passport and my 'iqama' (residency permit): everything was regular. One of the soldiers approached me and asked: " Where are you from". I told him: " I am a Palestinian-Syrian who currently lives in Lebanon". And he laughed and said: "So, a cocktail?" It was tremendous: you should represent the authority and serve the society and you keep fun of me in such a way? It is enough being Palestinian from Syria to be mocked in that way.

Summary

Yarmouk camp around Damascus had constituted the model of spatial and social integration of the Palestinian refugee community in Syria. The rapid collapse of the cultural and political capital of the refugee community constitutes the emblem of the Palestinian double catastrophe materialized in Syria. While being subjected to the same violent war dynamics, the stateless Palestinian refugees had to face additional obstacles to flee Syria. Within a regional context of progressive border restrictions, the Lebanese government has progressively issued specific restrictions on the entry and the regularization of Palestinians from Syria.

The linkages and relationship previously established between the Palestinian and Syrian communities beyond the national borders turned into a social and cultural resource in the aftermath of the Syrian breakdown. However, the current reality inside Lebanon's Palestinian camps- antipodal in respect with the previous living experience in Yarmouk- made up of legal discriminations and marginalization questions the cornerstone of their collective experience as Palestinian refugees in the Middle East. The ethnographic material collected inside Lebanon's Palestinian camps delineates how most of the "double refugees" consider a further emigration outside Lebanon's borders as one of the few practicable solutions to flee Lebanon's multi-levelled discriminations.

Even along this perspective, Palestinians' legal status constraints deeply condition the current geographical restructuration of their migratory field from Lebanon to Europe, forcing such "double refugees" to further explore unexpected and unsafe routes. Louay's biography described at the end of this chapter shows how the option to leave Lebanon bumps one more time into the international closed border policies. Instead of the materialization of a voluntary return to Syria as the only feasible alternative for thousands of Palestinians, the next chapter will expound on how Palestinian camps in Lebanon may turn into a valid "safe" alternative for Syrian refugees' permanence in the country.

Relevant Literature

Al-Hardan, A. (2016). *Palestinians of Syria. Memories of a Shattered Community.* Columbia University Press.

Al-Hardan, A. (2012). "The Right of Return Movement in Syria: Building a Culture of Return, Mobilizing Memories for the Return." *Journal of Palestine Studies*, Vol.41, n°2: 62–79.

Al Mawed, S.H. (1999). *The Palestinian Refugees in Syria: Their Past, Present and Future*. International Development Research Centre.

Bitari, N. (2013). "Yarmuk Refugee Camp and the Syrian Uprising: A View from Within". *Journal of Palestine Studies* 43 (1): 61–78

Dorai, M.K. (2016). "Palestinian refugees and the current Syrian conflict: from settled refugees to stateless asylum seekers?" In Natalia Ribas-Mateos. *Migration, Mobilities and the Arab Spring: Spaces of Refugee Flight in the Eastern Mediterranean edited by N. Ribas-Mateos, 158-173. Cheltenam, UK: Edward Elgar Publishing.*

Dorai, M.K (2003). "Palestinian Emigration from Lebanon to Northern Europe: Refugees, Networks and Transnational Practices". *Refuge* 21 (2): 23-31.

Fritzsche, Jasmin (2014). "Displacing the Displaced: Challenging the International Framework for Palestinian Refugees in light of the Syria Crisis." n°8. Cairo: The American University in Cairo. http://www.aucegypt.edu/GAPP/cmrs/Documents/Fritzsche%20-%20Displacing%20the%20Displaced%20FINAL-October%2030.pdf

Gabiam, N. (2016). *The Politics of Suffering: Syria's Palestinian Refugee Camps*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press.

Hanafi, S. (1997). *Entre deux mondes : les hommes d'affaires palestiniens de la diaspora et la construction de l'entité palestinienne*. Cairo: CEDEJ - Egypte/Soudan.

Meier, D. (2015). "The Blind Spot: Palestinian Refugees from Syria in Lebanon". In *In the Eye of the Hurricane: Lebanon and the Arab Uprisings,* edited by M. Wählisch and M. Felsch, 104-118. London: Routledge.

Salamah (2016). "The Unacknowledged Syrians: Mobilization of Palestinian Refugees of Yarmouk in the Syrian Revolution". *Confluences Méditerranée* 99: 47-60.

3. Palestinian camps: safe but frozen heavens?

What do you call the refugee camp?
Now you see houses, but early on the camp consisted of a group of tents.
Then after we had built huts, they allowed us to put roofs over them.
It was said that if we put actual roofs on our houses we'd forget Palestine,
so we just put up zinc sheets.
Do you know what zinc sheets do to you under the Beirut sun?
(Khoury, 2006: 236, emphasis added).

Introduction

Since 2011, hundreds of thousands of Syria's refugees settled in or around the twelve Palestinian camps established across the country of Lebanon more than sixty years ago. Several sources inside the camps reveal how inside camps Syria's refugees over numbered the Palestinian presences. Inside Bourj el-Barajneh camp, since 2011 the habitual 20.000 Palestinians residents have been joined by around the same number of newcomers from Syria and around 3-4.000 Palestinians from Syria. Within the current landscape of "overlapping displacements" (Fiddian-Qasmiyeh, 2012), the interactions between Palestinians and Syrians on the Lebanese territory spatially materialize through the new socio-spatial configurations of the camps.

While sharing and reinterpreting the restricted spaces of the camp, the social relations with the "other refugees" particularly intertwine with the daily practices of mobility, which implicate "exteriority" and "compresence" (Dorai and Puig, 2012). Along this perspective, mobility is a key practice to take into consideration because it reveals the complementarities of different urban spaces (Dorai, 2010) and denotes the power of such border transgression within daily life (Van Houtum & Van Naerssen, 2001). Following Soja's (1989) endorsement of the 'spatial turn' toward thinking about the significance of space in shaping and conditioning human life, this chapter depicts how newly displaced people reshape the perimeter of Palestinian refugee camps in Lebanon.

Moving from the definition of camps as spaces of governamentality (Foucault, 2007), the focus of the investigation is how the recent arrival of newly displaced communities into spaces inhabited and labelled for decades by "long-terms refugees" sheds an

alternative perspective on the morphology and the socio-spatial dynamics of Palestinian camps in Lebanon. Confronting the literature on refugees inhabiting urban and rural contexts (Agier, 2002), on border studies and on geographical and social mobility (Lussault & Levy, 2003) with an extended ethnography inside three distinct refugee camps, the chapter analyses how refugees turn the already established Palestinian camps into what I dare to define as "safe but frozen spaces".

3.1 "Camp Pause: Stories from Rashidieh Camp and the Sea" [61]

During the previous decades, the relation between institutional spatial politics and refugees' spatial practises constituted a topic especially with respect to Palestinians living in Jordan and Lebanon. Among others, Peteet (2005) investigated Palestinians' political sense of place through culturally grounded practices of daily living aimed at imposing their social organization and cultural maps on the camps. Moreover, Palestinian refugees living in camps daily experience different scales of mobility and develop a wide range of practices that extends beyond the camp's boundaries (Dorai, 2010).

Recent works from several disciplines have challenged the idea of the camp as space of pure bio-politics through urban debates, by looking at how refugees recover their agency through "producing spaces" both physically and politically (Sanyal, 2014:1). Among the others, I was particularly inspired by several initiatives that tried to give back the socio-cultural dimension of the places such as refugee camps through interactive, dynamic and multimedial mappings.

As such, I chose to open up this chapter with an extract from the exhibition "Camp Pause: Stories from Rashidieh Camp and the Sea" ideated by the artistic collective "Dictaphone Group" I was delighted to collaborate with during my last years of permanence in Lebanon. Beyond the contents exposed along the next pages, such a combination of live art method and interdisciplinary research has effectively inspired both my thesis and the documentary "Footballization". Their community-based project, exposed in Beirut for Qalandia International Festival 2016, results to be a visual

[61] http://www.jadaliyya.com/Details/33964/Camp-Pause-Stories-from-Rashidieh-Camp-and-the-Sea

ethnography of the daily life in a Palestinian camp through contributions from regional and local histories, personal biography, architecture and urban studies.

The following pages are an extract written by the authors' contribution appeared on *Jadaliyya* website to introduce the exhibition:

We know very little about why Palestinian camps are located where they are in Lebanon. We also know little about the trajectories of their communities. We often assume that, upon their arrival, refugees were directly transported to tents that later became "camps." Reflecting on ideas of refuge and ways of writing alternative histories of Palestinians camps in Lebanon, Dictaphone Group created a project entitled Camp Pause, commissioned by "Dar El-Nimer" in Beirut for "Qalandia International Festival 2016" [62]*. Our work process combines live art methods and multidisciplinary research. Live art and research are intertwined from the initial conceptualization of the project through its development and public viewing. In that sense, and like many art projects that are based in communities rather than art studios, the process is as crucial and telling as the outcome of the project (…)*

The project centers on a video installation we developed with four residents of the Rashidieh refugee camp, located on the coast of Lebanon, just south of the city of Tyre. We filmed their everyday routes from their homes to the sea, each participant leading us to the final scene in which they stand against the backdrop of the sea. Along the way, they weave narratives about the history of the land, their arrival, the struggle to build, and everyday life in a camp situated away from the city, bordered by agricultural fields and the sea. The installation is presented in a small room where audience members find themselves at the center of four stories, are each projected on the walls in the room. The video begins in the home of each of the participants, then move with them along the alleys and streets of the camp to finally reach the sea.

The encounters we had with various people we met by appointment or by chance revealed the spaces of the camp through their everyday lives and habits there. As a

[62] Qalandiya International was founded in 2012 as a joint contemporary art event that takes place every two years across Palestinian cities and villages. https://www.qalandiyainternational.org

lived space, the specificities of the days we visited the camp and experiences of the people we met dictated the outcome of the project. As visitors to the camp, we were struck by the contradiction between, on the one hand, its openness to the sea and the vast surrounding agriculture fields, and, on the other hand, the militarized entrance to the camp. The Lebanese army has set up a checkpoint at the entrance along with surveillance points on the seashore. Such discrepancies in the scenery reveal a masked oppression and a false freedom given to the camp's residents.

(…)

During the French mandate, the French authorities gave many plots of land to the Catholic Church's religious endowment. Sections of Rashidieh Hill, where there were already two churches, were part of this give-away. It was on that land where, in 1936, the French authorities established a camp for hundreds of Armenian refugees fleeing the area of Cilicia. Around a decade later, the Palestinian refugees arrived. An elderly woman from Rashidieh told us that she and her family first arrived to the town of Maroun al-Ras from northern Palestine. She goes on:

"From Maroun al-Rass to Bint Jbeil and from there we took a bus to Tyre. The district administrator found us. There was a train that passed through here. We took it towards Syria and arrived in Hama. We managed to get cars to take us to the mosque where there were many Palestinians. We stayed there for seven days. Later, they brought cars and asked each person what their occupation was so they could send them to an area where they could work. My father had said he wanted to go to Damascus but they did not allow us to. They sent us to Houran. We eventually returned to Damascus but then made it back to Lebanon and decided to stay in Tibnine because we had relatives there."

In 1950, a couple of years after arriving in south Lebanon, the Lebanese authorities decided to relocate all Palestinians residing in southern towns (e.g., Tibnine, al-Mansouri, al-Qlayla, and Bint Jbeil) to designated refugee camps. The authorities established one of these camps adjacent to the Armenian camp with nothing but tents. The residents there began to build walls from mud and clay in order to reinforce the tents. For every eight housing units, they built a shared bathroom fifty meters away. A

decade later, as Armenian residents began to leave, the Palestinian refugees began moving into those lots. Of the 311 Armenian houses, two hundred of them remain today and are commonly referred to as the "Old Camp."

In 1963, UNRWA built a new camp to house Palestinian refugees who were then residing in French mandate military building called "The Gouraud Barracks" in the Beqaa city of Baalbeck. After the Lebanese government had decided to evacuate the barracks, building the new camp began in Rashidieh, adjacent to the Old Camp. The single housing units were ninety-nine meters squared and composed of three rooms, a bathroom and a courtyard lined a grid network of roads. The residents of "Gouraud Barracks" moved in, along with some others who moved out of the Old Camp. However, the rooms were very small and the ceilings too low. Over the years, Rashidieh camp residents demolished these houses and built their own houses (…)

After the 1969 agreement in which the Lebanese government recognized the presence of the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) in Lebanon, and its control of the camps, the Rashidieh residents worked the Jaftalak fields surrounding the camp without paying any fees. Each farmer could choose a plot of land to plant and they would come to be (informally) known as the owner of that plot. The Jaftalak land was public land divided between the Ministry of Finance, the Ministry of Education, and other-defined state land. Yet the cultivation of Jaftalak fields was limited to greens: pinto beans, lettuce, parsley, cilantro, radishes, etc. The farmers were prohibited from growing fruit-bearing trees since the land did not legally belong to them. According to Lebanese property law, whoever plants a tree, automatically owns the land it is on.

Currently, rapid changes are affecting the farmlands that characterize Rashidieh. This is partially caused by an ongoing battle to build between the residents and the Lebanese authorities. Because of its proximity to Palestine and its location on the coast, there is a history of resistance fighters (fida'yeen) departing by boat to carry military operations against Israeli targets. As a result, the camp has seen many Israeli attacks, most notably in the years 1973, 1978, and 1982. During the latter, Israel destroyed six hundred shelters and displaced four thousand people.[iv]

After 1985, the Lebanese state took complete control of the Palestinian refugee camp's entrances and forced all residents to enter the camp through a single checkpoint guarded by the Lebanese army. This siege is still in place today, in different forms. Restricted by demarcated boundaries and the sea, the Rashidieh camp cannot expand. Instead, new construction projects are built within these boundaries, compromising shared spaces in the camp such as football fields, the seashore, and the farmland. Mona, who lives close to what was once the camp's first football field, explains:

"The first football field was here, inside the camp. It was nice because we would sit on our balconies watching and rooting for the players. With time the camp felt overcrowded and people began building on the land of the football field. Now it is completely gone. There are three others, but they were all opened by Palestinian factions. This one was not owned by anyone. The residents of the camp had made it themselves."

She also told us about when construction on the farmland started:

"Demand for houses was growing, especially after the influx of refugees from Syria. It is more profitable to build and rent the land than to farm. Look at the al-Kawakina neighbourhood as an example. It was once planted and is now completely built on. The landowner fenced the land in ten years ago and planted it. Five years ago, he started housing construction there. He built rooms and rented them to displaced Syrians. Initially, he had built two rooms for a small café, but that was not successful so he began renting them out. He also started selling plots of land for others to build on."

Mona and many others talked about the Rashidieh seashore.
The coast of the city of Tyre, including Rashidieh's beach, was subject to sand grabbing and suction during the Lebanese Civil War (1975-1990) in a dubious and corrupt process which involved stealing the sand. This has resulted in the threat of collapse and other damage by waves to the houses directly facing the sea. The residents of the camp are dealing with this problem by building a wall between the houses and the waterfront. For this, they use rubble from roads and other infrastructural projects. Despite their

ugliness, the piles of rubble are an appropriate solution because they do not cost the residents anything except the effort of transporting them to the site. Residents of the seafront are most often the poorest in the camp. They chose living on the beach for the low price of the land. An owner of a cafe on the beach recounted, "my parents were looking for low prices, not for the sea." (...)

Like many of Dictaphone Group projects, we found that recounting the narrative history of spaces is key to understanding the present state of things. The early recollection of Palestinians arriving to Lebanon in 1948 reveals a similar lack of understanding and lack of organization by the Lebanese state that we are now witnessing with Syrian refugees arriving in vast numbers since 2011. Um Khalil, a Palestinian resident of Rashidieh, recounts reaching Syria after having stopped in Lebanon on the way from Palestine. She was consequently forced by the Syrian authorities to go back to Lebanon as this was her first port of arrival after Palestine. This practice is now known in Europe as the "Dublin Regulation," which calls for the deportation of people to where they were first registered as refugees irrespective of their preferences or life plans.

We are reminded through this project that the disregard of people's pain and personal choices, the casual racism and vilification of refugees in Lebanese villages and towns, and the calls for grouping refugees in camps that are easily controlled and ultimately attacked is nothing new. While the whole world is busy discussing what they call the "refugee crisis," we hope to remember the importance of listening to those who are really in that crisis. We also hope to remember that leaving people in limbo with few resources and rights is not a solution but an absence of one.

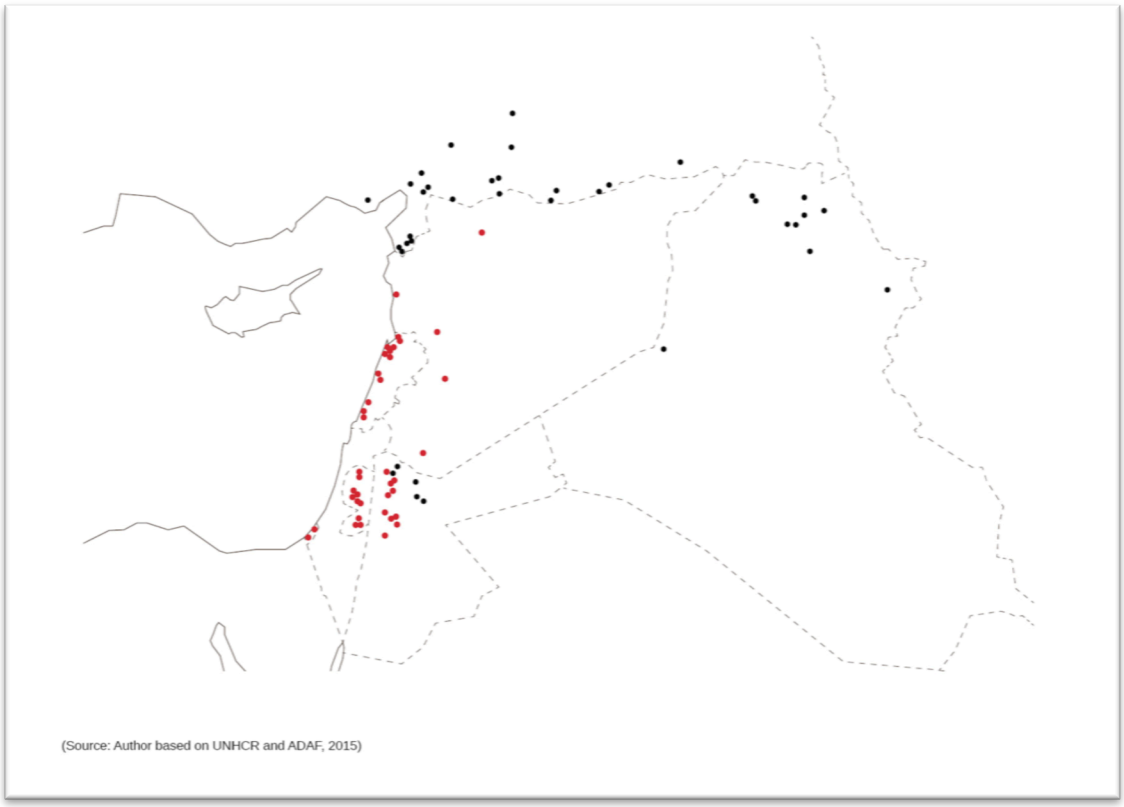
3.2 Palestinian camps: spaces of urban relegation

Rashidieh is one of the 12 official Palestinian refugee camps in Lebanon that are mostly scattered across the length and breadth of the country. UNRWA, that took over management of the camps from the Red Cross in 1950[63], divided the national territory among five distinct areas of operations: Tripoli (Nahr el-Bared, Beddawi), Beqaa (Wavel), Sidon (Ein al-Hilweh e Mieh Mieh), Tyre (al-Buss, Rashidieh e Bourj al-Shamali) and Beirut (Mar Elias, Shatila, Bourj el-Barajneh e Dbayeh)[64]. As such, most of these camps were mostly designed in 1948 and after 70 year they have still been playing a fundamental role in the Palestinian national imagination and national struggle (Farah, 1999).

Palestinian refugee camps are not just the stage for expressions of claims about refugee lives, but are centrally important in making and shaping those lives (Ramadan, 2013). In the first chapter we have expounded on how during the last years the Palestinian camps' experience became the "scarecrow" behind the question of establishing refugee camps for Syrian refugees. The debate and official decisions concerning camps for refugees in Lebanon remains directly linked by many to the past and present experience of Lebanon vis-à-vis the Palestinian refugee camps. Differently from the other Syria's neighbouring countries, Lebanon, despite being the country mostly affected by the refugees' demographic presence, has been strictly refusing the establishment of refugee camps to host Syrian refugees. In the map below we can easily visualize how the black dots that localize the newly established refugee camps for Syria's refugees are totally absent in Lebanon.

[63] For more information about the Agency's mandate, role and functioning see: Bocco, R. (2010). "UNRWA and the Palestinian Refuees: A History within History" in Refugee Survey Quarterly, vol.28, Nos 2& 3

[64] https://www.unrwa.org/where-we-work/lebanon



Map 2: *Refugee camps in the Middle East.* Red dots represent Palestinian camps, while the black ones stand for the newly established camps for Syrian refugees. (Source: Ayham Dalal).

Worldwide, the proliferation of refugee camps is drawing attention towards their diverse typologies and the multiplicity of actors and reasons that influence their emergence and transformation. As the architect Ayham Dalal (2017) suggests beyond the elaboration of the map, refugee camps are strongly components of the Middle East landscape. In this sense, Palestinian refugee camps in the region distinguish themselves from the recently established due to intertwined political, historical, and geographical trajectories of evolution: most of the refugee camps are part of the different main cities in their respective countries or host regions.

As such, recounting the politicization of such emergency spaces (Zeidan, 2017) and the narrative history of such spaces by their inhabitants is key to understanding the present state of things: the question of space matters since it is due to space and its appropriation that refugees can cope and advance (Grbac, 2013). While labelled for decades as univocally marginalized "spaces of exception" (Agamben, 2003), recent literature has recently focused on investigating how Palestinians in Lebanon reinterpret

their long-term commitments to the camps. The refugee camp for Agamben is the quintessential zone of indistinction, where refugees can be reduced to 'bare life' and be subjected to various forms of violence without legal consequences (Owens, 2009). Recent works expounded on how Palestinians rather transcended the link between the host state and the homeland, extending to a plurality of spaces outside of the binary 'home-camps', with the latters turning into spaces of belonging and longing even after refugees have relocated elsewhere (Gabiam and Fiddian-Qasmiyeh, 2016).

Within the existing debate between urban planners and human geographers, Palestinian refugee camps have been considered part of the post-city urbanism (Alsayyad & Roy, 2004), where the 'home' represents the microcosm through which the urbanization of camps can be better understood (Sayigh, 2004). Palestinian camps have witnessed a shift from shelter to habitat through different processes – usually affected by the hybrid and shifting sovereignties; yet, new camps are built with optimized shelters and prefabs). Such as in the case of Rashidieh described above, the existence of old urbanized Palestinian or Armenian refugee camps redefines the boundaries between categories classically used such as camp and city or refugee and citizen (Dorai, 2014).

According to Dorai (2010), the classical distinction operated between refugee camps dwellers and urban refugees is mainly an operational one produced by international organisation on the base of their residency place and not according to their short and/or long term spatial practices. In particular, the growing trend of 'urban refugees' complicates this understanding of refugee camps, calling into question its categorization as spaces of 'bare life' and biopolitics (Sanyal, 2014:3). Due to an overwhelming urbanization processes in the suburbs of the major Lebanese city, a visitor from outside may barely distinguish some Palestinian camps from the rest since they are mostly located within a sort of urban continuum. In this sense, Sanyal (2014) insists on how the objective should be to investigate the ways in which camps urbanize, and more critically question how their increasing informalization and marginalization can inform our current understanding of urban politics.

The ways in which the urban space of the camp is produced is through a process of socio-spatial self-organization where a new space of a city-mimicking typology emerges (Al Nassir, 2016). Recent studies on urbanisation and urban development in

Lebanon have even categorised Lebanon's Palestinian camps as slums (Fawaz & Peillen, 2003). However, whilst acting as independent spaces within a country, they have nonetheless always maintained their own passivity, in the sense that they are physically and psychologically besieged and feeling unable to expand (Qasmiyeh & Qasmiyeh, 2013). Subjected to a humiliating regimen of socioeconomic strangulation and denial of basic human rights (Khalidi and Riskedahl, 2010), the presence of the refugees is mostly univocally associated to counterinsurgency policing treating refugees as 'security' subjects and Palestinian camps as *juzzur amniyyat*[65] (Hanafi; 2010).

Parallel to the urbanisation process, refugee camp population has profoundly changed due to emigration, internal displacement and social mobility. Tackling numerous migratory trajectories throughout the last decades, migration plays a crucial role in the social evolution of the Palestinian refugee camp in Lebanon (Dorai, 2010: 11). Since the Fifties the places where Palestinians settled in the suburbs of Beirut where not only Palestinians areas, but poor and segregated neighbourhoods where marginalised migrants, such as Syrians, Kurds or Armenians also settle (Sfeir, 2008). Contextually, the camps have witnessed the arrival of Palestinian refugees coming from other parts of Lebanon as well as arrivals of few Lebanese citizens and Syrian, Asian and African immigrants who settled with the end of the civil war at the beginning of the 1990's.

Therefore, throughout the last years, Palestinian camps in Lebanon have been progressively become less and less homogenous urban enclaves (Dorai and Puig, 2012: 15). The camps have historically played the role of temporary "host space" for waves of migrants settling in the city for different reasons. The geographical proximity with the city centres and the relatively affordability of transportations from and to the workplace have attracted in the camps thousands of low-income employees. In this sense, the presence of non-Palestinian population in refugee camps leads us to reconsider the traditional perception of refugee camps and to view them as spaces of urban relegation (Dorai, 2010: 78).

[65] Literaly: "security islands". Such an obscure definition refers to the security measures adopted by the Lebanese State in respect with the Palestinian camps. Therefore, *juzzur amniyyat* may be conveyed in English as "insecure isolated spaces".

Abourahme showed how the production of space in the everyday life of a refugee camp "complicates the permanent temporariness of encampment, that opens up a temporality between the permanence of the built (camp) and the temporariness of the political condition (refugeehood)" (2014, 214). With the arrival of numerous newly displaced people from Syria, the already-overcrowded Palestinian camps have once more turned into new spaces of encampment (Janmyr and Knudsen, 2016). Strictly connected to the further "restriction of spaces" due to the arrival of newly displaced communities, the number of the recently arrived refugees in most of the camps overcomes the Palestinian "host community". In the next paragraphs it will be delineated how focusing on the entanglements between distinct spatio-temporalities of exile and the reinvention of daily mobility patterns contributes to enlighten reasons and dynamics behind the Syrian settlement inside the Palestinian camps.

3.3 "You somehow feel free"

Along the first week of November 2016, several international news agencies reported that Lebanese forces were starting to build a security wall and watchtowers all around Ein el Hilweh camp[66]. Located on the outskirt of the city of Sidon, Ein el Hilweh camp currently hosts around 100.000 persons into only 0.8 square kilometres made up of precarious buildings stacked one against the other. The camp and most of the adjacent neighbourhoods are enclosed within a security zone, successively guarded by the Lebanese Army and the Palestinian Security Committee, which separates it from the Ta'meer neighbourhood (Ghandour, 2013). Following an agreement between the Lebanese Army and most of the Palestinian factions, the construction of a wall was reported by the Lebanese institutions as necessary to control the entry of radical armed groups within the camps.

Beyond the popular resentment condemning the construction of a wall that reminds people of the Israeli one erected in the West Bank, very few media reported how Ein el Hilweh had actually already been blocked off with metal fences and strict checkpoints at its entrances (Ali Nayel, 2017). Ein el Hilweh is not the first camp

[66] Among the others, see Z. Tahhan, "Lebanon freezes plan for Ain al-Hilweh's 'racist wall'." Al Jazeera, 23/11/2016. http://www.aljazeera.com/news/2016/11/lebanon-freezes-plan-ain-al-hilweh-racist-wall-161121124417114.html

affected by a pervasive restriction of bodies: according to several people interviewed during my fieldwork, the current securitization reinforcement regards all the twelve Palestinian camps in Lebanon.

In this sense, the perceived "high level of threat" posed by camp dwellers is identified according to both broad and localized notions of social hierarchy and identification that ranked and sorted persons by making use of various sensorial registers including the visual discernment, verbal communication, and mental determination of characteristics such as class, gender, age, and religious and national background (Monroe, 2016: 89) Among the twelve camps and tens of gatherings around the country, such securitization dynamics recalls in the refugees' imaginary the measures implemented around Nahr el-Bared before the 2007-conflict that razed the camp to the ground[67]. Mahmoud, who is currently the responsible of a Palestinian association based in Tripoli area, recalls how:

Ein el Hilweh was a huge commercial arena; the market of the poor in Saida area as Sabra and Shatila was before the war as well as Nahr el-Bared was for Trablos before 2007. Before being destroyed, Nahr el-Bared was the market of Akkar region more than Tripoli itself: in the camp you could find nine gold shops before the war! But now everything has gone: strict and strict checkpoints enclose both the camps, dividing the city from the camps and suffocate the dwellers as well as the market in both the camps. Checkpoints want to show that that the Lebanese Army have authority. Anything bad happens against them is something against all the country, because the Army is the only symbol of national unity. From a personal point of view, it instils that you are not free: if you want to get your house you have to ask permission.[68]

Officially implemented with the target of preventing and repressing the proliferation of criminal activities between the camps and outside, these checkpoints actually constitute a heavy physical and mental burden especially in respect with people

[67] Nahr el-Bared camp is located in the northern part of Lebanon, 16 km north of Tripoli: during summer 2007, fighting between Fatah al Islam and the Lebanese army has led to the displacement of the camp population and the destruction of the camp infrastructure and houses. On the issue, Khalidi, Muhammad A., and Diane Riskedahl, "The Road to Nahr al Barid: Lebanese Political Discourse and Palestinian Civil Rights." Middle East Report, n 244 (2007): 26-33.

[68] Mahmoud (October 2016, 13). Personal interview, Nahr el-Bared Camp.

living in the camp without valid legal documents. Historically, beyond common criminals and "terrorists" wanted by the *mukhabarat* (the intelligence agency), Palestinian camps- as "extraterritorial spaces" out of the Lebanese legislation and interference - work as safe havens for thousands of undocumented migrants[69].

This exceptional system traces back its historical and legal origins back to Cairo Agreements (1969) signed by Lebanese authorities and PLO, which banned Lebanese security forces from entering the camps and allowed Palestinian forces to carry arms on camp's ground. A powerful parallel militia and economy that in turn created a series of autonomous spaces beyond the control of Lebanese forces was obviously a threat to the political stability of the country (Sanyal, 2014: 567).

Although Lebanese government officially abrogated the Agreement in 1989, Palestinian camps may still be disguised as extraterritorial areas where Palestinian factions have the control of the internal dynamics of the camps[70]. In this sense, unlike the majority of scholarship that tends to portray the exception solely as a source of marginalization, disenfranchisement and exclusion, the exception as an analytical category may also become a carefully managed resource through which camp residents claim their rights and defend their political identity (Woroniecka-Krzyzanowska, 2017: 161).

Hence, throughout the troubled decades of exile Palestinian camps have been continuously performing their primary role of "spaces of refuge". For instance, during the very last days of May 2007 Beddawi camp has hosted around 10.000 Palestinians displaced in the aftermath of the destruction of Nahr el-Bared camp. Back to current times, after the latest arrival of numerous Syrian and Palestinians of Syria finding refuge in the camps, the social function of "protection" for people without legal documents currently extend to thousand of newly displaced people. According to a local well-known responsible in the camp interviewed in 2015, Beddawi camp has tripled its own inhabitants for the last eight years, causing evident problems in terms of housing and resources. Questioned about the reasons justifying the "appeal of the Palestinian

[69] Among the others, we also find former Palestinians fighters arrived in Lebanon from several counties in the region during the Civil War and not been able to come back to their homelands.
[70] On the issue, check R. Siklawi, "The Dynamics of Palestinian Political Endurance in Lebanon", in *The Middle East Journal* (Vol. 64, n°4, Autumn 2010).

camps", Mahmoud reveals another detail related to safety in terms of social relationship between the refugees and the locals:

At the beginning Syrians were staying in the villages near the borders. Then, day-by-day, they tried to be close to the camps because inside everything is cheaper than outside, included the rent of the houses. In addition, in the last few months many more Syrians entered the camp: at the beginning of the crisis, Sunni Syrians moved to the north of Lebanon because Sunnis mainly inhabit the area. But since few months ago, internal fights have spilled over in Tripoli because thousand of Syrians tried to find a job here, causing the reaction of the Lebanese in this area[71]*. Because of this, the Lebanese tried to get them back the chance to work, since Syrians ask for less money than a Lebanese worker. It's a matter of competition inside the Sunni world itself and there were high moments of tension between the communities. Because of this, many Syrians moved closer to the camp in order to find safety. Now more or less we have half of population coming from Lebanon and about another 25.000 coming from Syria, if you sum Syrians and Palestinians from Syria.*[72]"

Following these complex dynamics and benefiting from the porous and transnational familiar connections spread between the two countries[73], numerous Syria's refugees have found a shelter within Lebanon's Palestinian camps. As stated by numerous camp dwellers met throughout my fieldwork, the newcomers - beyond the economic benefits due to cheaper house rents and living costs- moved inside Palestinian camps in order to be less subjected to State authorities' arbitrary restrictive measures. Due to the historical and political reasons expressed above, Lebanese military authorities do not usually exercise their coercive power inside the perimeter of the Palestinian camps. Abou Khalil, one of my teammates who during the night used to work with the Palestinian security forces in Bourj el-Barajneh, explained me how such

[71] Mahmoud here refers to several clashes registered in Lebanon's northern city of Tripoli between gunmen loyal to opposing sides in neighbouring Syria's conflict. Over the past ten years, more than 20 rounds of violent clashes between the Sunni Muslim residents of Bab el-Tebbaneh and the Alawite Muslim residents of Jabal Mohsen have left over 200 people dead. For a detailed analysis of the local dynamics: http://syriastreet.com

[72] Mahmoud (October 2016, 13). Personal interview, Nahr el-Bared Camp.

[73] On the issue, Estella, C. " Syrians in Akkar: Refugees or Neighbours? Rethinking Hospitality towards Syrian Refugees in Lebanon". In Refugeehosts website (15/01/2017) https://refugeehosts.org/2017/01/15/rethinking-hospitality-towards-syrian-refugees-in-lebanon/

strategies of protection:

Our battalions just monitor the streets of the camp in order to guarantee the safety of the camp, but we are not like the Lebanese Army. We do not stop people in the middle of the road to check their own identity and their documents. Otherwise, I should stop myself since my residence is not valid anymore! Most of the people who recently came from Syria are without documents: that is specifically why most of us came to the camp. Because at least inside the camp you can freely go around: you somehow feel safe![74]

The internal security management is thus exercised by the Palestinian Security Committee, which includes representative from camp militias, which often collaborate with the Lebanese Army patrols located on the outskirts of the camps in case of military joint operations. Even in such a small camp as Mar Elias, located right in the centre of Beirut, Palestinian military forces rely on the Lebanese Army in exceptional cases. As stated by the lawyer Souheil Al Natour and confimed by other residents in the area:

Few months ago some Syrians rented an apartment at the upper part of the camp in order to use that space as a strategic base from where to throw a rocket against the nearby Russian embassy. Palestinian police within the camp so that informed the Lebanese army, which stormed the apartment and arrested these guys: there is collaboration between Palestinian police and the army in order to avoid bigger tensions[75].

3.4 Entrapped

Within such a marginalized arena socially disguised as a geographical exceptionality, the legal status of the Syria's refugees in Lebanon has vital implications on the daily socio-spatial organization of the newcomers since the very first entries during Spring 2011. Therefore, referring to dynamics of residency and mobility in and around the camps, the issue of legal status necessarily constitutes an entry-point

[74] Abou Khalil (June 2017, 12). Bourj el-Barajneh camp, personal interview.
[75] Souheil Al Natour (26/10/2016). Mar Elias Camp, Personal interview

(Martin, 2015) from which a complex social hierarchization develops shaped by the different temporalities and the trajectories of the various exiles. Consequently, these measures deeply contribute to put refugees' residency and mobility patterns at stake. As extensively mentioned along the previous chapter, Syria's refugees in Lebanon have to deal with institutionalized practices of progressive illegalization jeopardizing their entry and permanence in the country.

According to a nationwide survey about the perception of security among Syrian refugees and the Lebanese community, the great majority of the refugees refer that residency requirements impact safety, and more than half of the surveyed do not feel confortable with moving around the Lebanese territory[76]. On many dimensions such as mobility, assaults, checkpoints, and access to services, legal residency results as a relevant variable in the refugees' daily life all over Lebanon. Hence, in the case of Khouloud and many other camp dwellers, the adoption of a "hiding tactics" inside the camp questions the "regime of visibility", defined as the forms of spatial materialization of the social (Lussault & Levy, 2003).

In this realm, the notion of invisibility works in respect with a group of people, such as the case of the newly displaced refugees "illegally" resident in the country, that adopt a strategy of visibility and dissimulation according to the contingencies and the perceived safety situation. Working on foreigners blocked inside a French detention centre, Le Courant (2009) shows to which extent entrapped such people rather choose to become invisible as a defensive strategy to escape an expulsion order from French territory. Generally, we can retrace such trajectories of dissimulation along many invisible spaces such as refugee camps on the margins of the world (Agier, 2002). In this sense, the "historical" spatial relegation imposed on Palestinian camps by Lebanese authorities turn into a tactics of survival in respect with the increasing securitization trajectories adopted in the governance of Palestinian camps.

Therefore, such dynamics of strategic and reciprocal invisibilities related to mobility materialize around the military checkpoints scattered all over the country. In Foucaldian terms, the deployment of these measures reinforces and materializes in the space "a technology of power entailing the management of space and movement for

[76] Published by the *Institute Des Sciences Politiques, Universitè Saint-Joseph de Beyrouth*: "Perception of Security among Refugees and Host Community". A Power Point version of the report is available at: https://www.usj.edu.lb/intranet/actu/pdf/5663.pdf

peoples out of place" (Malkki, 1996: 444). Coherently with the securitization tendency all over Lebanon, the physical presence of this dispositive results particularly evident inside areas that are considered by the national authorities as particularly sensible.

Around Lebanon's realms of security, social class, national origin, and gender are important facets of the complex social matrix upon which decisions about spatial access are made (Monroe, 2016:90). Due to all the historical and political reasons previously highlighted, it becomes relatively obvious to consider how the utilization of checkpoints results particularly significant in the governance of the Palestinian camps. Strictly connected with the spatial organization of bodies imposed by the Lebanese authorities around the camps, the legal status of refugees deeply condition the socio-spatial organization of Syria's refugees living in the Palestinian camps. Since the end of the Lebanese Civil War, Lebanese institutions have progressively intensified its illegal restrictions on the right of freedom of movement for Palestinian refugees living in Lebanon's twelve camps and tens of gatherings[77].

In this sense, the numbers of camps' entrances and exits have been progressively curtailed: in particular, the control of the entrance of refugee camps plays an important role in the degradation of the newcomers' freedom of movement and their perception of safety. Historically speaking, this specific geographical conformation traces back its origin to the military besiege of several camps conducted by several anti-Palestinian forces during the Civil War. Beyond the most cruel and well-known episode of the Sabra and Shatila Massacre, especially Palestinians living in Beirut Area keep on referring to the sieges during the War of Camps (1985-1987).

Jamila, who was a young girl living in Shatila at that time, recalls:

During the War of the Camps two checkpoints were closing the camp: the first one was controlled by Syrians, the second by Amal militias. Just women were allowed to move through. At the same time, negotiations at the checkpoints were impossible because the

[77] On the latest security measures and their social effects inside the Palestinian camps, check Lamb, F. (January 2016, 15). "Lebanon Escalates Its Denial of Civil Rights for Palestinian Refugees". Available online at: https://www.counterpunch.org/2016/07/15/lebanon-escalates-its-denial-of-civil-rights-for-palestinian-refugees/

soldiers were substituted everyday.[78]

Since the end of the Lebanese Civil war, Palestinian camps, while acting internally as independent extraterritorial spaces within Lebanon, have nonetheless been physically and psychologically besieged by the Lebanese institutions. In such an entrapped situation, most of the people deprived of any kind of legal recognition in the country remain ostracized inside the refugee camps. Therefore, due to the progressive relegation of the newcomers into the " obscure field of illegality", concrete risks of arbitrary detention prevent most of Syria's refugees from freely moving in and out the Palestinian camps.

Beyond historical and legal coordinates, Nour – a young Syrian woman coming from Damascus- exemplifies the consequences of such dispositions in terms of daily life:

We cannot currently renovate our Visa or ask for a new own: we were provided with a free three-month extension in September and once this is done we do not know what is going to happen. Our real concern regards our documents; they are all currently kept at the General Security in Beirut. Even for this reason we do not feel safe at all here in Lebanon: we move and work mostly just inside Bourj el-Barajneh, because we do not want to risk any problem because of Visa. Just few months ago the Police kept my husband and he spent nine days in Baabda jail. We fled Syria in order to escape all these problems, and he was arrested right on a checkpoint in Lebanon. We feel entrapped here[79].

Unsurprisingly, the term *inhibas* (entrapment) mentioned by Nour has the same *hbs* root such as *habes,* one of the terms indicating a jail in Arabic. The theoretical insights just described give leeway for formulating a notion of how performances of space excel in time and space through practices of control and regulations and *de facto* makes borders pervasive for disadvantages populations (Jorgensen, 2016). In this case we may refer to a specific refugees' spatiality, that Lussault (2007) defines as the spatial

[78] Jamila (July 2017, 10). Personal interview, Shatila camp.
[79] Nour (November 2014, 7). Personal interview, Shatila camp.

dimension of human agency and encompasses all actions, effective or solely virtual or imaginary, that human beings living in society perform.

With checkpoints materializing the relational control of space imposed on the governance of Palestinian camps, the newly displaced refugees themselves constantly forced to reshape their own mobility patterns according to any specific crossed location. As concerns especially the vast majority of them deprived of any kind of legal accountability in Lebanon, the checkpoints enrolling their perimeters constitute the material and psychological boundary between an inside "safe place" that risks being frozen from the outside.

In this case, the control of the camp at the entry of the camps by the physical presence of the army pervasively conditions refugees' life far beyond the ordinary and becomes the bane of refugee existence (Peteet, 2005). The transition from the concept of border to that of *bordering*, at the centre of the processual shift in border studies, helps us to look at border in terms of dynamic social processes and practices of spatial differentiation (Brambilla, 2015: 15). Connecting this element with the specificity of Palestinian camps in Lebanon, the anthropologist Allan underlines how "the mechanisms of State control, [reminds] us that a border is not simply a physical line [...] but an interactive space whose form is determined by the person crossing it" (2014: 180). In her research focusing on Palestinians of Syria in Lebanon, Heide-Jongersen (2016) theoretically suggests that border crossings ought to be understood in a framework, which includes both the physical borders crossed and the notion of pervasive discriminatory borders beyond conventional border spaces.

On the dynamics of power between "illegal" refugees and the checkpoints around the camps, the Palestinian lawyer Al-Natour explains:

Checkpoints want to show that the Lebanese Army detain the real authority. Anything bad happens against them is something against all the country, because the Army is the only symbol of national unity. Then the checkpoint instils that you are not free: if you want to get your house you have to ask permission. If someone tells you that there is your file lies inside the office of the secret services, you are paralyzed. Your immobility is a guarantee for the army that you are not going out but officially they are not

segregating you: in this way, your neglected freedom of movement is not because of them but officially results as your choice. Moreover, the application of the checkpoint is up to the arbitrary of the local battalion: the law gives them the permission to arrest anyone illegal and it's up to each one to deal with that. If you are caught, you get up to one-month imprisonment and a paper obliging you to go back to your country? But which country? Palestine? Well send me back to Palestine! Since they cannot, they are returned to the camp and cannot move around.

Throughout this asymmetric relation between the individual and the national institutions exercising performativity of power at the checkpoints, the refugees' agency is primarily determined by the lack of citizenship and their legal status. Since most of Syria's refugees have been living in Lebanon without legal residency, we can understand how the pervasiveness of these focal points start far beyond the crossing momentum. Worried of being detained or arrested at the checkpoints, most of the camp dwellers deprived of a legal status in the camp constantly reshape and modify their own movement patterns even before performing it.

In this perspective, the epistemology of the term checkpoint ("hajiz" in Arabic)- reminds and evokes the multiplicity of meanings behind the Arabic word *houdoud* (borders). As emerged during a discussion held in Beirut with Kamal Khoury, one of the founders of the Jordanian satirical magazine "Al Hudood"[80], the polysemy of the term "borders" in Arabic reveals meanings that are deeply connected with several experiences narrated in the previous pages. In contrast to the word 'frontiers' which is used in the context of politically and economically driven interests of powerful countries, the Arabic word 'houdoud' is situated in the religious and cultural practices of the Islamic world (Al-Sudeary, 2012: 47). Within the anthropological debate on the issue, many Mernissi's work (2007) evokes how the polysemy of "houdoud" evoking the personal insurmountable borders is strictly related with the punishments for acts forbidden in the Quran.

Actually, the term *houdoud* also stands for "self-censorship", the regulation of a group's actions and statements by its own members rather than an external agency. Self-

[80] For more info and a detailed description of the polisemity of the term, visit Al Hudood Website at https://alhudood.net

censorship here materializes in a conscious behaviour refraining a person from exercising his/her will in total freedom: borrowing from Mernissi (2009), the *houdoud* in this situation function as safe frontiers that protect from the dangers and can be closed in case of fear. In line with such an etymological perspective, Rajaram and Grundy-Warr introduced the "borderscape" concept not only as a 'visible place', rather referred to a complex web of conditions of possibility that are not immediately visible and inscribed in the relationship between space, lived experience and power (Brambilla, 2014).

Borrowing Soja's theorisation of the "thirdspace" (1996), space might be interpreted as simultaneously real and imagined, since it always represents a link between physical, geographical spaces and mental, cultural constructions of space. Projecting the literal meaning of self-censorship as related to the freedom of speech into the geographical dimension of the Palestinian camp described above, I try to adopt the definition of "houdoud" as self-censorship in order to better frame to the self-abstention of most of the Syria's refugees met during my fieldwork in the Palestinian camps. After several unpleasant experiences happened within the circle of friends and family, most of Syria's refugees got used to refrain themselves from crossing the checkpoints managed by the Lebanese Army. While this picture may generally describe the "illegal" refugees' daily mobility patterns all around Lebanon, in the case of besieged spaces such as most of the Palestinian camps, this self-censorship results in a frozen situation for thousands of camp dwellers. Therefore, I dare to depict Palestinian camps in Lebanon as "safe but frozen spaces".

While working as "safe spaces of protection" in respect with the intrusion of the Lebanese authorities, Palestinian camps reveal the other side of the coin in relations with the outside environment. This picture recalls what the anthropologist John Gulick (1976) defines as the "ethos of insecurity", a complex of cultural and social norms that inhibit individuals from reaching finalities that people themselves consider as legitimate and desirable. In particular, Gulick relates the origins of this ethos to "the feeling of refuge and of danger", a pervasive feeling that is peculiarly related to two different ways of regarding oneself in the world.

According to the author, as it peculiarly happens in the case of "safe but frozen spaces" such as the Palestinian camps in Lebanon, the individuals experience a feeling of safety in company with their family members or compatriots, while they feel in danger out of this "familiar environment". They are thus constantly navigating, "searching for those 'manners of acting' that can delineate configurations of spaces where they feel that they are, or should be, relatively safe, places that somehow feel familiar and different from chaotic sense of the totally unfamiliar" (Migdal, 2004:10) In the case of Syria's refugees inside the Palestinian camps, Gulick's "ethos of insecurity" has much to deal with the complicated relations emerging inside the camps between Palestine's and Syria's refugees. My fieldwork in such a peculiar camp as Nahr el-Bared revealed particularly explicative to show how refugee-refugee relations contribute to transgress the time/space of governamentality imposed by outside and to contemporarily restore feelings of safeness inside the camps.

3.5 Inheriting precarious transitional shelters

Among all the Palestinian camps in Lebanon, Nahr el-Bared represents numerous peculiarities as it combines both a long history of conflicts and consequently a peculiar socio-spatial relationship with its immediate outside environment[81]. Established in 1949, the camp is located 16 kilometres north of the city of Tripoli in northern Lebanon. Tarek, an old inhabitant recalls how: "*Before being destroyed, Nahr el-Bared was the market of northern regions comparable to Tripoli: in the camp you could find nine gold shops before the war."*[82]

During summer of 2007, three months of combat fighting between Fatah al Islam and the Lebanese army led to the destruction of the refugee camp. As a result of the fighting, Nahr el-Bared – which used to host around 30,000 Palestinians before the conflict – was razed to the ground and most of its residents were displaced around the country, including to Baddawi refugee camp (Mansour and Yassin, 2010). After the ceasefire, several international organizations have laboriously financed a process of

[81] On the issue, check M. Newman, "The Ongoing Nakba in Lebanon: The Case of Nahr el-Bared Refugee Camp" in Forced Secondary Displacement: Palestinian refugees in Arab host countries, al-Majdal, issue No. 44

[82] Tarek (May 2015, 4). Personal Interview, Nahr el-Bared camp.

participatory planning for the reconstruction of the camp under an agreement with the Lebanese government (Misselwith & Hanafi, 2009).

Mahmoud, an old man who has been living in the camp since he was born in 1957 says: “When the camp was rebuilt, the main street was enlarged in order to suit the dimension of the Lebanese army tanks and get them able to storm the camp at any time. Moreover, they did not recognize the Palestinianess of the new part of the camp and there it was the target of reconstruction[83].” The camp was composed of the "old camp", that was totally destroyed, and the "new camp", an unofficial extension was partly destroyed.

Despite a number of significant and enduring delays, mainly due to funding shortages, approximately three quarters of the old camp have been rebuilt ten years later, and most of the inhabitants have been provided with new houses in the camp. In Nahr el-Bared – as well as in other camps in Lebanon – Palestinians are residents but they are not able to regulate their own mobility: strict checkpoints enclose the camp, dividing residents from the city and suffocating both the camp-dwellers as well as the camp’s markets. Officially implemented with the aim of preventing and repressing the proliferation of criminal activities within Nahr el-Bared and between the camp and outside, checkpoints constitute a heavy burden for people living in the camp, especially the ones who do not have valid legal documents.

Since 2012, thousands of Syrians and Palestinians from Syria have found several residential solutions inside Nahr el-Bared camp. In terms of accommodations, a wide range of housing solutions has developed in this precarious setting. In the camp, the “host community-refugee community” (Fiddian-Qasmiyeh, 2016) is instead constituted of people who have repeatedly been evicted and displaced. On the same way of other Palestinian camps in the country, established Palestinian residents rearrange their households by renting out their garages or spare rooms to Syria’s refugees, while others rent out their whole house and invest that money to rent a place outside of the camp or to to finance a “one-way ticket to Europe”. Property relations in refugee spaces are remarkably telling examples of how refugees and slum dwellers have come to constitute a larger informalized population. Refugees in camps in Lebanon can rent out rooms in

[83] Mahmoud (November 19, 2015). Personal interview, Nahr el-Bared.

their homes, homes that they do not actually own (Sanyal, 2014: 568).

However, the peculiar status and the besieged architecture of Nahr el-Bared further complicate the legality of the new refugees' accommodation inside the camp. While some of its former inhabitants are moving out of the camp in order to find a better accommodation, numerous newly displaced persons have been moving inside Nahr el-Bared through permits released by the Lebanese military authorities who monitor the camp. According to an UNRWA protection officer met in Nahr el-Bared, "Syrian nationals can live in Nahr el-Bared but they have to regulate before their own status with the Lebanese Administration: the right to be in Lebanon is differently than the right to stay in the camp. In this case, getting a residency permit to live in the camp is strict not just as a matter of law, but also deals with a "negative environment" enrolling Palestinian camps. Concerning Nahr el-Bared, you have to arrange with a Palestinian owner in order to have an attestation of residence within the camp, even if you are not the owner of the dwell[84]."

Therefore, several historical, territorial and architectural dynamics contribute to further complicate the landscape of overlapping refugees sharing spaces inside a Palestinian camp. For thousands of Syria's refugees living in Nahr el-Bared, being legally resident in the camps does not mean being recognized as "legitimate" camp dwellers. Hence, the right to staying in Lebanon must overlap with a right to the camp. While the average rental cost for an apartment (around $200) is cheaper than outside the camp, a few months after their arrival from Syria many newcomers ran out of resources due to an inability to find work – a product both of the camp's irregular economy and the immobility placed on refugees by the state. From July 2015, the situation deteriorated even further, when UNRWA suspended monthly cash assistance (totalling $100) for housing for Palestinian refugees from Syria in Lebanon due to financial gaps in their funding[85]. Consequently, many Palestinians from Syria were forced into an insolvency spiral, leading to multiple evictions by their landlords.

[84] Coline (November 2016, 11). Personal interview, Tripoli.
[85] Starting July 2015, more than 43,000 Palestine refugees from Syria in Lebanon who used to receive monthly cash assistance of US$ 100 per family towards housing and US$ 27 per person towards food will stop receiving the cash assistance for housing. In Nahr el-Bared such as in other many camps, the courtyard of UNRWA schools and offices were filled with people holding a peaceful, sit-in protest.

In the face of this precarious situation, many refugees have pursued several informal practices in order to at least guarantee basic shelters for their families. Among these, one peculiar situation is represented by the occupation of the metal barracks which had formerly been inhabited by Palestinian refugees – as a temporary solution offered by UNRWA – after a large part of the camp was destroyed in 2007. Throughout the decades of exile, in addition to symbolizing the hardship of camp life, the zinc-covered barracks came to symbolize the temporariness of Palestinian refugees' stay in these camps (Gabiam, 2011: 153). However, as well as inheriting a precarious legal status, Palestinians from Syria are currently inheriting precarious transitional shelters too.

While walking around an internal narrow during my first visit in Nahr el-Bared camp at the end of 2014, I chanced upon tens of metallic barracks formerly inhabited by refugees as a temporary solution after the destruction of great part of the camp occurred in 2007. These 120 barracks, distributed on two floors along two different blocks facing each other, were trailers or shipping containers transformed into small apartment units located outside of the official camp on private land rented by UNRWA. Since almost all of the former dwellers left these temporary shelters once they were granted a new house in the camp, most of the barracks were empty when Syrians and Palestinians from Syria arrived in Nahr el-Bared.

Figure 3: *Barracks in Nahr el-Bared.*
Nahr el Bared camp, 9th December 2014. Picture by the author.

Yasser, a disabled man from Yarmouk camp in Syria explains how he sought to reconvert these empty shelters in his new household:

I came to know that many people from Yarmouk had previously came to Nahr el-Bared. Moreover, some relatives of wife had told me there was a house ready to host us. However, we found ourselves in a very humid and cold garage for cars.. After spending a few months there, both of my seriously ill children could not stand that kind of humidity anymore and no one could help us with paying rent. At that time my neighbour informed me that some of the barracks in the old part of the camp were free, because the old inhabitants had been provided with new houses in the rehabilitated sector. Since all the empty containers were previously locked by UNRWA, I broke the door open and moved all my family here[86].

In order to tackle deeply precarious vulnerabilities, more and more refugees resort to informal practices of securing services through "illegal" methods, shifting the boundaries between deviance and property (Allan, 2014: 31). Along such a complex process of home making, people often turn to what Bayat defines as "quiet encroachment of the ordinary", meaning a non-collective but prolonged direct actions of dispersed individuals and families to acquire the basic necessities of their lives in a quiet and unassuming illegal fashion"(Bayat, 2010). In this sense, within a few days, more than forty families, mainly Palestinians from Syria, replicated Yasser's initiative, seizing the empty barracks, and moving in with their belongings. After a few weeks of self-appropriation procedures, the former inhabitants of the remaining barracks realized they had an opportunity to benefit from these vacant spaces and started "selling" them for around $150 each.

In spite of being the formal, legitimate owner of the barracks, UNRWA has overlooked these transactions and has not directly intervened in the matter. According to the bureaucracy of the Agency, in fact, these barracks have been considered to be closed spaces since the former legitimate dwellers moved into their newly built

[86] Yasser (December 2014, 9). Personal interview, Nahr el-Bared Camp.

houses. In this context, the triangular relationship between the former dwellers, the newcomers and the UN Agency exemplifies the ephemeral boundaries between "legal and illegal" that pervade the atmosphere of Palestinian camps in Lebanon. The relations between the refugees and the Organization thus rest more on informal negotiations. For instance, UNRWA still supplies water and electricity to the barracks, but, contrary to the situation in the rest of the camp, does not consider itself responsible for the maintenance of the barracks' infrastructure.

This situation thus further exacerbates the already-precarious conditions of the barracks: built with low-quality materials on the outskirts of the camp over ten years ago, households live in unhealthy conditions and in isolation. During a meeting on a cold day in December, Yasser states:

While in summer we live in a sort of microwave, during the winter you live in a freezer. UNRWA has provided us with an electrical heater but we have just sold that because we needed some money. I had started some business inside the camp: some people supported me with finding a motorcycle in order to sell coffe around the streets of the camp. But it did not work: people probably did not appreciate my coffe. Then after two months I decided to open a manakeish bakery with my brother in law. But after few weeks he suddenly went back to Syria, stole my money and left me with around 400$ debt. Indeed, it is really complicated to find a real good job opportunity as far as we cannot freely move out of the camp.

As extensively mentioned in the last paragraphs, Yasser remarks how the restrictions on his mobility severely impact the camp dwellers' daily life. During our first encounters, Yaser had revealed me his plan to emigrate due to the impossibility of financially sustaining the family and a socio-economic precariousness also related to a shortage of work caused by the reduction of his freedom of movement because of securitization policies at the checkpoints rather than his physical disability. This is especially the case of people deprived of any valid legal status who have found a shelter inside an over-securitized camp such as Nahr el-Bared.

3.7 "De-freezing" Nahr el-Bared

Throughout my fieldwork in the camp, I had to partially deal with limitations to my freedom of movement as a foreigner not officially working or having other kind of recognized activity inside the camp. Since foreigners not working in the camp are allowed to access Nahr el-Bared just through a daily permission laboriously released by the Lebanese *mukhabarat*, I was able to access Nahr el-Bared just few times during the last years. Then, in order to avoid one-time snapshots due to these logistic constraints, I preferred restricting my fieldwork just on few persons whom I regularly met during my visits. In this way, the issue of evolving time turned out to be a valid anti-reductionist element, allowing me to shed light on how Syria's refugees navigate precariousness and marginalization by constantly negotiating with strict securitization policies inside and outside Nahr el-Bared.

Starting from this encounter, I have been keeping contacts with Yaser and visited him and his family several times during the next years. However, the logistic arrangements for our meetings were complicated: despite I had to ask for a permission to enter the camp at any time, our meetings had to be held inside the camp since he did not feel confident while moving outside Nahr el-Bared. However, despite these internal legal obstacles and his walking impairment, in July 2016 a Whatsapp voice message sent by Yaser informed me that he was currently looking for a suitable lawyer… in Stuggart, Germany! While the rest of the family still lives in the occupied metallic barracks, Yaser had left Lebanon t and travelled throughout the Balkan Route till reaching southern Germany despite his walking impairment.

During my last visit inside Nahr el-Bared in November 2016, I have finally encountered Fatma, Yasser's wife, who had been being waiting for a family reunification with her husband in Germany since March 2015.

Yaser has already obtained the refugee status in Germany and he got approved his request for family reunification for all of us. However, the situation is currently stuck because in order to get a Visa from the German embassy we need to get a passport

before. And this is a huge problem especially for Palestinians from Syria such as us: there are two solutions and both are impassable. At the Syrian embassy in Beirut we were asked 400$ per person: it means 1600$ and we cannot find them after that Yaser borrowed more than 8.000 $ to get Germany. From the other side, getting a passport would be so much cheaper in Damascus: just 100$ for the whole family. However, beyond the security problems connected with the current situation in Syria, no one guarantees us that we will be able to come back to Lebanon once we go out of the country. We are completely stuck here.[87]

With the final remark "we are completely stuck here", Fatma sums up both the "international dimension" concerning her family reunification abroad together with a more "local feeling" of being stuck inside the camp she has been residing for more than four years. Questioned by an UNRWA protection officer about their current legal situation in the country, Fatma depicts a family picture made up of overlapping levels of immobility and invisibility that deeply condition refugees' daily life. Hence, despite the formerly mentioned negotiations and agreements between the General Security and UNRWA, Fatma had just recently been denied the renewal of her *iqama* (residency permit).

While the UNRWA protection officer, supported by a local translator, hardly manages to recollect the legal information concerning Fatma and three brothers of her, we rapidly realize that none of them were granted what promised in the agreement. "Decisions held at national level are never respected on local level, since their application is rather delegated to the total arbitrariness of the local territorial units. For instance, while Fatma's sister was provided with a free one-month extension in September, one of her brothers attending the General Security meeting at the same day was given an immediate departure order. Far beyond being a mere decisions held at Beirut's central level, we can see how issues legality and mobility issues are rather constantly a matter of arbitrary decisions at local level.

Rawan, one of Fatma's neighbors who was assisting at our conversation added: "UNRWA gives us 100$ for the house and 30$ each for food through electronic cards. But in the camp we do not have any bank! What we can do somehow is going out of the

[87] Fatma (November 2016, 10). Personal interview, Nahr el-Bared camp.

camp, cross the main road and get the closest bank to withdraw the money, but I cannot even go to Tripoli. It is a real mess for Palestinians from Syria here: other people do not have so many troubles with the Police and the Army[88]".

Despite several mediations between International Organizations and the central government for renewal of the *iqama* (residence permit) free of charge, the application of the checkpoint is rather delegated in many cases to the arbitrariness of the local authorities. In front of evolving securitization policies performed at local level through arbitrary and extemporaneous dispositions, I concentrated on how the way refugees constantly negotiate their trajectories by mobilizing a wide spectrum of resources and networks recollected along unexpected translocal settings.

Deprived of any kind of general rules and decoding patterns, the relations between refugees and local institutions in power at the edge of the camp are interestingly "played" every time at any checkpoint. However, along such an asymmetrical game between the local battalion and camp's dwellers, refugees' agency and negotiation power should not be underestimated. "Refugees, across generations, actually live with and in relation to the camps cannot be wholly captured by either the perspective of nationalist politics or the viewpoint of humanitarian provisioning" (Feldman, 2015: 245). Right in this sense, few months later Fatma informed me that, new practices of negotiating and even "transcending" the checkpoints at the entrance of the camp has been emerging during the previous months. "Things deeply have changed. The Army now has all the information about who is coming and who is leaving: at least there checkpoint documents are not an issue anymore and, except of few cases, they do not arrest people anymore."[89]

Such features of reciprocal visibility, asymmetrical power and collective representation are not the only factors that determine the logics behind the extension of refugees' spatiality. In this case, informality is another fundamental resource that can reshape the outcome of collective trajectories in and around a secure area. For instance, this informal rather precarious agreement between refugees and authority allowed many persons to look for job opportunities even outside the camp, where higher salaries turn

[88] Rawan (November 2016, 10). Personal interview, Nahr el-Bared camp.
[89] Fatma (November 2016, 10). Personal interview, Nahr el-Bared camp.

into a fundamental resource to cope with the shortage of work opportunities, lack of social services and the concomitant cuts in funds by the charity associations and UNRWA.

Abed- Fatma's youngest brother- has recently found employment in one of the concrete factories located in the neighbouring area of the camp. While feeling quite satisfied with his job, like many Palestinians from Syria in the camp he constantly adverts to the precariousness of his status.

I have just accidentally broken into two pieces my ID and now I cannot get a new copy if not coming back to Syria. As alternative, I may also ask for a passport at the Syrian embassy in Beirut, but this process is too expensive and, moreover, I do not feel confortable with that. So that, after breaking my documents I started restricting my movements, avoiding passing by Dar el Aamar checkpoint.[90]

Abed here refers to the Lebanese Army checkpoint located on the costal road leading to Tripoli, which constitutes the main urban centre of the region. According to several local and international organizations, during the last months many Palestinians from Syria lacking documents or with expired residence permit have been detained at the Deir Aamar. In this way, refugees' personal experiences of detention throughout several different locations from the city to the camp show the pervasiveness of discriminatory borders in terms of material and mental restrictions on mobility (Heide-Jørgensen, 2014).

3.8 Trying to merge different catastrophes

The arrival of thousands of Syrians and Palestinians from Syria to the already-overcrowded camps in Lebanon further exacerbates daily conditions in the camp. Along this perspective, new interactions emerge between two groups of refugees that, despite a shared sense of collective origin and national attachment, were hosted for decades in different countries and yet now find themselves obliged to share increasingly contracted

[90] Abed (November 2016, 10). Personal interview, Nahr el-Bared camp.

spaces[91]. As regards the camps' security issues, Palestinian factions, whose internal divisions had been nurtured for decades by the Syrian government, surprisingly stayed neutral even in front of a crumbling and perilous event as the Syrian civil war, (Meier; 2015).

Far from the current dominant narrative about Palestinian camps in Lebanon, explicit frictions were rather related to the ordinary aspects: main problems were perceived in the field of the competition of the job market as well among children at school. Once more, basic aspects deeply involved with everyday life, as school and work, constitute a crucial issue and a privileged point of observation for new relations and imaginaries emerging inside the Palestinian camps.

Being historically discriminated in the employment and prevented from working in several occupations, Palestinians tend to be confined in the informal sector or in the least profitable labour activities (Hanafi and Long, 2010). Then, among the camp dwellers -prevalently males- working outside the camp, the majority is employed in low-income jobs such as the construction sectors. Moreover, these sectors have been currently getting further hierarchically diversified in the aftermath of the recent arrival of more than one million of refugees from Syria. While Palestinians of Lebanon have been historically paid less than the Lebanese, Syrians and Palestinians of Syria create a further underpaid category in the competition of the job market. Therefore, the newcomers are replacing many Palestinians (and Syrians living in Lebanon before the war) in many occupations inside and outside the camps, creating new elements of tension between the communities[92].

In Nahr el-Bared, all these dimensions overlap with a further dimension of transitional uncertainty due to the destruction of the camp in 2007 and the subsequent problems that have emerged during the camp's reconstruction. In the camp, the "host-community-refugee community" binary (Fiddian-Qasmiyeh, 2016) is

[91] On the issue, Fiddian-Qasmiyeh, E. (2016) 'Refugee-Refugee Relations in Contexts of Overlapping Displacement,' *International Journal of Urban and Regional Research*, Spotlight On "The Urban Refugee 'Crisis'"

[92] "Assessment of the impact of Syrian refugees in Lebanon and their employment profile". Report drafted by ILO Regional Office for Arab States - Beirut: ILO, 2014. https://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---arabstates/---ro-beirut/documents/publication/wcms_240134.pdf

instead constituted of people who have repeatedly been evicted and displaced. Current dynamics evolving around the metal barracks exemplify this ongoing sense of precariousness.

Contextually, in light of the enduring absence of effective international policies, relations between communities turn into a daily struggle for existence, as it often occurs in situation of extreme precariousness. While several cases of tensions relating to economic competition have been registered especially during 2014, Nahr el-Bared is currently experiencing a sort of tacit but active form of cooperation among and between the camp dwellers (Fogliata, 2017). In this situation, a shared experience of overlapping displacement has turned into an unavoidable cultural and social resource to overcome the overall precariousness of the camp.

In the case of the barracks, for instance, several established Palestinians from Lebanon mobilised – individually and collectively through local associations – to guarantee their right to stay together by providing new dwellers with basic humanitarian assistance. Broadly speaking, despite the constant precariousness facing most of the inhabitants, the majority of the Palestinian associations have prioritized intervening in favour of Palestinians from Syria living in the camp. Fatma, a Palestinian woman born in Nahr el-Bared and who recently returned to the camp following her displacement in 2007, recalls:

We are all currently living in the same situation and sharing the same burden. Here in Nahr el-Bared we had a four-floor building and we are still waiting to receive a new small apartment. When we were displaced out of the camp we used to believe that the camp could not have been totally destroyed: it was the best camp in Lebanon. Yarmouk was also the best camp in Syria, and they destroyed it completely. Now I can feel the burden of these Palestinians coming from Syria, they are passing through the same experiences of multiple catastrophes. They are also looking forward to coming back home[93].

[93] Noura (November 2016, 10). Personal interview, Nahr el-Bared camp.

Summary

With the arrival of numerous newly displaced people from Syria, the already-overcrowded Palestinian camps have once more turned into new spaces of encampment with the consequent exacerbation of their socio-economic conditions. I have investigated how the recent arrival of newly displaced communities into spaces inhabited and labelled for decades by "long-terms refugees" sheds an alternative perspective on the morphology and the socio-spatial dynamics emerging inside the Palestinian camps in Lebanon, which emerge as "safe but frozen spaces".

In Nahr el-Bared camp, the refugee-refugee socio-spatial relations overlap with a further dimension of transitional uncertainty due to the destruction of the camp in 2007 and the subsequent problems that have emerged during the camp's reconstruction. The ethnographic work inside the camp showed to which extent the "historical" spatial relegation imposed on Palestinian camps has turned into a tactics of survival in the context of the increasing securitization discipline adopted since the arrival of Syrian refugees in the country.

Throughout this asymmetric relation between the individual and the national institutions exercising performativity of power at the checkpoints, Syrian refugees' mobility is primarily determined by their precarious legal condition. By observing in depth how people with different background and temporalities reshape the boundaries between the camp and its margins, I argue that camp dwellers virtually extend the mental space of the camp beyond the socio-spatial hierarchization intrinsic to their legal statuses.

Relevant literature

Agier, M. (2002) *Aux bords du monde, les réfugiés*. Paris: Flammarion.

Bayat, A. (2010) *Life as Politics, How Ordinary People Change the Middle East*. Stanford, Ca., Stanford University Press, 2010.

Dora ̈i, M.K. (2010). "Palestinian refugee camps in Lebanon. Migration, mobility and the urbanization process". In *Palestinian Refugees. Identity, Space and Place in the Levant*, edited by A. Knudsen and S. Anafi. Abindgon, New York: Routledge.

Dorai, M. K. and Puig N. (eds) (2012). *L'urbanité des marges. Migrants et réfugiés dans les villes du Proche-Orient*. Beirut: Ifpo – Téraèdre.

Fawaz, M. & Peillen, I. (2003). *Urban slums reports: The case of Beirut, Lebanon", Understanding Slums: Case Studies for the Global Report on Human Settlements*. London: Earthscan.

Foucault, M. (2007). *Security, territory, population: Lectures at the Collège de Frances, 1977-1978.* Basingstoke, UK: Palgrave Macmillan.

Gulick, J. (1976). "The Ethos of Insecurity in Middle Eastern Culture": In *Responses to Change: Society, Culture, and Personality,* edited by G. A. De Vos*, 137-156.* New York: D. Van Nostrand Company.

Hanafi, S. (2010). "Governing the Palestinian refugee camps in Lebanon and Syria: the cases of Nahr el-Bared and Yarmouk camps". In: A. Knudsen and S. Hanafi (eds.) *Palestinian refugees. Identity, space and place in the Levant,* edited by A. Knudsen and S. Hanafi. Abingdon, New York: Routledge.

Malkki, L. (1996). "Speechless emissaries: Refugees, Humanitarianism, and Dehistoricization". *Cultural Anthropology 11*(3), 377–404.

Migdal, J. S. (2004). *Boundaries and Belonging: States and Societies in the Struggle to Shape Identities and Local Practices.* Cambridge, Cambridge University Press.

Peteet, J. (2005). *Landscape of Hope and Despair: Palestinian Refugee Camps*. University of California Press.

Sanyal, R. (2014) "Urbanizing Refuge: Interrogating Spaces of Displacement". *International Journal of Urban and Regional Research* 38(2): 558-572.

Soja, E. (1996). *Thirdspace: Journeys to Los Angeles and Other Real-and-Imagined Places*. Oxford: Basil Blackwell.

4. Footballizing Bourj el-Barajneh camp

The soccer pitch is the ultimate meritocracy that defies the omnipresent wasta[94]

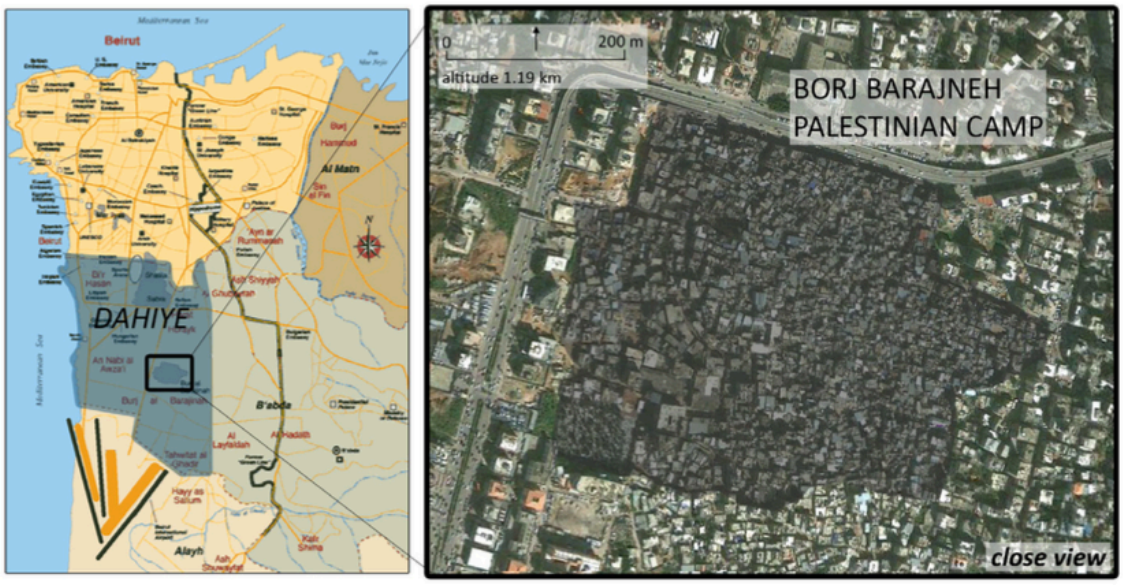
Introduction

By hinging the ethnography on Bourj el-Barajneh camp, I focus on how Palestinian and Syrian refugees reshape their daily socio-spatial practices in respect with the spatial hierachization of bodies imposed within and around the camps. How do Palestinian and Syrian refugees negotiate their spaces and roles inside such an overcrowded and besieged Palestinian camp as Bourj el-Barajneh? Throughout my research, I observed how the control of spaces imposed by the authorities on the base of the legal status deeply impact refugees' daily life, but also indirectly and directly provoke new modalities of reshaping the space through original modalities worth investigating.

My participation within a football team of the camp turned into a privileged playful arena, where I experienced and analysed the everyday logics of exclusion/ inclusion, reformulation of belonging and alliances among players from several national, political and class backgrounds. Focusing on daily cultural practices, biographies and personal trajectories revolving around the only football field inside Bourj el-Barajneh, this chapter focuses on the dimension of play as an unexpected perspective for looking at the reproduction of new feelings of belonging inside the refugee camps and how such feelings are translated sometimes into creative practices of mobility and original practices of co-presence.

While the majority of the Palestinian teams are affiliated with the local Palestinian factions and reclaim their attachment with homeland within their denomination, all of them present inside their rooster an important number of players arrived from Syria. Wihin this framework, I have tried to investigate to which extent, in the case of non-Palestinian Al-Aqsa players, the commitment to the club spills over far beyond the perimeter of the football field and contributes to blur the physical and mental boundaries between the camp and its margins.

[94] Iskander, Adel, Geddo and messianic football, Egypt Independent, 5 August 2010, http://www.egyptindependent.com/opinion/geddo-and-messianic-football



Map 3: *Bourj el-Barajneh camp, Dahiye and Beirut*. (Source: Elisabeth Habib)

4.1 The Camp and Dahiye

Following the initiative of a prominent Palestinian family, Bourj el-Barajneh camp was established in 1948 by the League of the Red Cross Societies to accommodate Palestine refugees forced to flee from five villages (Tarshiha, Kabreh, Kwikat, Ghabssieh, Sheikh-Daoud) in the northern historical Palestine (Gorokhoff, 1984). When the camp was first established, refugees of each of the five Palestinian villages occupied a specific area in the camp in order to imitate the pattern and layout of their original villages in Palestine that still divides the Bourj el-Barajneh into these five distinct neighbourhoods (Habib, 2012).

Planned to host few hundreds of refugees on the land of a small village on Beirut southern outskirts, the camp underwent several transformations mainly related to the contingent political situations. After enjoying between 1969 and 1982 a relatively flourishing period during the days of the revolution *(ayyam al-thawra*[95]) under the

[95] The Arab defeat following the 1967 War gave birth to new phrases in the Palestinian political culture, such as "the armed struggle", "the resistance", "the revolution", and others that signified the re-birth of the Palestinian nationalism through the constituency of armed factions. In 1968, the PLO National Charter was amended to reflect this new reality, saying: "the armed struggle is the only way to liberate Palestine" (Kawar, 1996: 34). Finally, it was Israel's invasion of Lebanon in June 1982 - with its three-

control of the Palestinian Liberation Organization, the camp was severely targeted and damaged during the Lebanese Civil war (1975-1989) as it was considered as an important military base and training camp (Latif, 2008).

The intensification of the conflict reached its climax in what is called the "War of the Camps" between May 1985 and July 1988, during which Bourj el-Barajneh camp underwent a 6-month siege. In 1985 Bourj el-Barajneh camp was literally sieged by Amal military factions for more than six months, with the support of the Syrian Army that controlled the entries to the camp (Siklawi, 2012). In the collective memory of the camp residents, the War of Camps represents a crucial cornerstone in terms of relations with the city and especially in terms of relations with the neighbourhoods enrolling the camp.

Maqusi's works and performance (2015) showed the modality through which "both the refugees and the camp-space manifested their pure potential through re-creating existing, everyday 'architectural-elements' to serve as a war tactic for existential survival". Through creating openings between adjacent walls above-ground, and stretching wooden panels to act as bridges between the opening, the camp inhabitants created multiple 'above-ground' pathways which connected more than 400 shelters around the camp (Maqusi, 2015). Contextually, while internally avoiding operating on the ground and thus getting the reputation of being a maze-like space, the camp dwellers resorted to daily-survival strategies in order to"force" the 6-month siege.

During one of my first visits to his house, Abou Mahmoud, a man on his sixties who at that time was part of the Palestinian military forces inside the camp, drives me to the camp's secondary entrance located on the Airport road and reveals:

You see other there? No one could enter or go out from the camp. Not even mothers with their hungry children. We started to cultivate vegetables and plant seeds inside the camp, but this was not enough. I still remember when Italian soldiers came to the camps as interposition forces: they started to distribute chocolate to all the children around. We even started to learn some Italian terms such as "Acqua[96]" in order to let

month siege of Beirut and the PLO forced removal from the city- that signalled the end of the Palestinian revolution in Lebanon (Matar, 2011).

[96] "Water" in italian.

them understand our needs. Days were so hard but we managed to survive and go beyond. The siege was very hard: we were not even able to go out and get some food. At a certain point we were running out of powdered milk for babies: the situation was dramatic indeed. Therefore, we decided to simulate a huge accident within the camp to open the way for the entrance of an ambulance that had been loaded with milk, oil and other necessary stuff. The ambulance was, instead, stopped at the camp checkpoint on the Airport Road and our comrades on the ambulance were killed.[97]

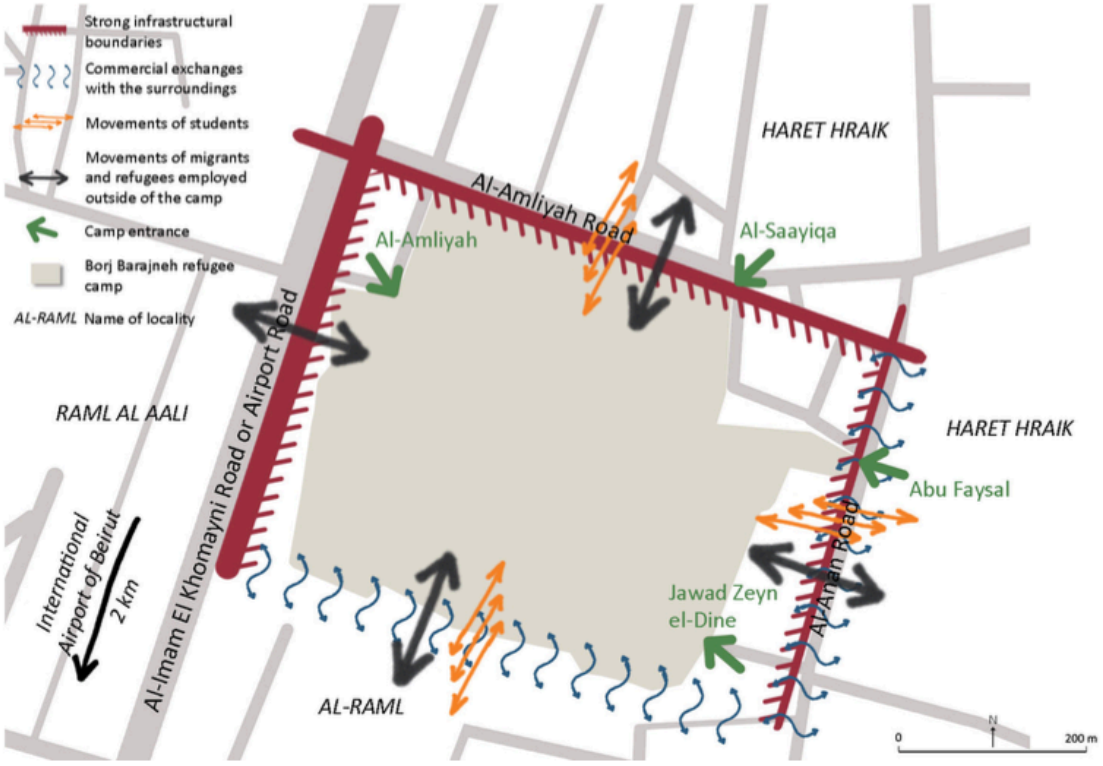
The Shia Amal militia besieged the camp and the intense conflicts caused a heavy death toll and severe structural damages: 50% of the houses in Bourj Barajneh were destroyed (Shafie, 2007). Beyond the immediate human and material losses, the end of the Civil War materialized in a strict politics of securitization in respect of the Palestinian camps and their inhabitants. As a consequence of the Ta'if Agreement (1989), the further restrictions on the territorial expansion out of the boundaries of the camp forced Palestinians to extend vertically in order to accommodate the contemporary dramatically increase of population.

During the Nineties, thousands of poor Lebanese families and migrant workers- mainly Bangladeshis, Sri Lankans, Sudanese as well as Egyptians and Syrians- set in the camps for their cheap rents and accessibility to the main cities (Latiff, 2008). Similarly to other Palestinian camps in Lebanon, since 2011 the camp has been providing refuge to a huge number of refugees from Syria. While numbers may be misleading in such a cluttered situation, several local and international sources unofficially estimate that 20.000 Palestinians and around the same number newcomers from Syria (of which 3-4.000 Palestinians from Syria) currently reside on 0.2 square kilometers [98].

[97] Abou Khaled (April 2017, 10). Personal interview, Bourj el-Barajneh camp.

[98] Such estimates were confirmed by several many organizations operating inside the camp. However, it is difficult to find reliable data on the number of inhabitants in each camp due to the lack of recent surveys collected by an univoc organization. According to a report drafted in November 2017 by Basmeh & Zeitoneeh, a Syrian NGO operating inside the camp, Palestinian refugees from Syria and Syrian comprise 50% of the 40.000 camp residents. Full report available at: https://www.alnap.org/system/files/content/resource/files/main/bz_november_2017_-_barriers_to_education_for_female_and_male_syrian_youth_in_shatila_and_bourj_al_barajneh.pdf

Starting from the history of the camp through its most troubled periods, we can trace to which extent the geographical margins of the camp assume a functional meaning in terms of regulating and separating an "inside" related to the contracted spaces of the camps from an "outside" that extends towards the city. With the exception of the southern area confining with the poor Shia neighbourhood of al-Raml-Bourj el-Barajneh camp is clearly demarcated by a road system that separates it from the surrounding Shi'a dominated neighbourhoods known as *al-dahiya* (Habib, 2012). All the main roads thus constitute a fundamental way to the city for the camp inhabitants. Following a usual feature of the Palestinian camps in Lebanon, urban margins, where refugees and migrants settle, are not disconnected from the urban dynamics of the surrounding cities (Dorai, 2010).



Map 4: *Bourj el-Barajneh and its articulations to its immediate enviroment.* (Source: Elisabeth Habib).

My research mainly expounded the northern and eastern parts, where the camp's margins merge with the Shia suburbs of Haret Hreik. Due to this overwhelming urbanization processes in the whole area, a visitor from outside may barely distinguish

the Palestinian camp from the rest since it is located within a sort of urban continuum (Harb, 2003). Fawaz and Peillen (2003) have categorized Palestinian camps as urban slums in continuity with the other Beirut southern suburbs known as Dahiye. Starting from the Lebanese civil war years, this area has witnessed an urban sprawl and extensive random urbanization (Harb, 2010) due to massive internal migrations of populations displaced by violence from north-eastern suburbs of Beirut, the Bekaa valley and south Lebanon led to. These mostly illegal settlements, which are still partly characterizing the urban space of the southern suburbs, progressively formed what was to be called the "belt of misery" (Verdeil, 2010; Harb, 2003) of Beirut.

Part of this belt being constituted by Palestinian camps, the southern suburbs were seen more under the political angle, as particularly dangerous surroundings, than under the planning angle as an urban problem (Verdeil, 2010). Throughout the last decades, moral assessments about place impacted and were complicated by the relationship between Dahiye and the Beirut city center. Until the post-Liberation apex of Hizbullah's popularity in 2000, Dahiye was stigmatized by Beirut dwellers of *all* religious groups (including some wealthy Shia Muslim residents) as an Islamist ghetto of poor rural migrants who are ignorant about urban life, and as a space of anarchy, chaos, and illegality (Harb, 2003).

The post-civil war period saw more construction and an increase in population and urbanization whose trend was rapidly expanding in the aftermath of the reconstruction following Israel's destruction of many areas during the 2006 war (Saksouk-Sasso, 2015). While being defamed by several sources as a less modern urban space, unworthy of consideration as part of Beirut's urban modernity (Harb & Deeb, 2013), Dahiye, with an area of 16 square kilometres currently dwelled by around 400,000 to 500,000 inhabitants, is almost as big and inhabited as Beirut (Habib, 2012).

At the end of the civil war, the southern suburbs were no longer just an area distinct from the city, but they also detached themselves from the other suburbs of Beirut (Habib, 2012). This area progressively became "the only suburbs with their own identity established on the change of social practices, on the politicization of a community group, and on the use of a specific vocabulary: by dropping the suffix 'the south' *al-dahiye al janubiya* became progressively *al-dahiye*, THE *dahiye*, the suburbs"

(Habib, 2003:11). As such, Dahiye has traversed the category of geographical place by moving beyond being only a formal classificatory concept (Saramifar, 2015: 8).

As Mona Harb (2003) recalls, in Lebanon, *dahiye* is not only the mere Arabic translation of 'the suburbs'; in Lebanon the term *dahiye* expresses an abstract existence for its residents and others. It embodies the religious (one of the biggest strongholds of the Shia community in Lebanon), social (poor Lebanese population and Palestine refugees), spatial (distinct space delimited by major highways and characterized by important urban centers as well as illegal settlements), economic (important presence of shops, banks, and small industries that allow some self-sufficiency), and political.

As per the latter, around Lebanon these areas are unanimously recognized as stronghold of the Hezbollah political party led by Hassan Nasrallah which controls it military and politically and has long by-passed the authority of the state characteristics of the territory. In the wake of the summer 2006 Israeli bombardment, Hezbollah took charge as the main planning actor in the reconstruction of Dayihe and played a dominant role in the rehabilitation of its architecture and services (Fawaz, 2009). "For Hezbollah, reconstruction was an act of defiance and survival so building and media mobilisation had to be swift" (Harb and Fawaz, 2010: 24).

The "Party of God" acts as a para-state pervading the public landscapes, organizing spaces, controlling movements through a hyper-visible multi-level presence. "It is the site of negotiation for people in a space like Dahiye, which Hezbollah and the Lebanese state struggle to appropriate as their stronghold, to colonise and ultimately influence its practices" (Saramifar, 2015: 5). Then, my fieldwork, while being unavoidably influenced in terms of logistics by such a peculiar socio-political configuration- turned even more significant since the analysis of practices of mobility around the spaces had to deal with the presence of a local para-state actor in a securitized area.

Inside such a peculiar and entangled space, "mobility turns into a key practice to take into consideration because it reveals the complementarities of different urban spaces, and the different kinds of relations they have" (Dorai, 2010:4). Broadly speaking, human mobility offers a relevant and possibly provocative point of

observation as far as it allows us to study the articulation of the State (its agencies, local, and international institutions) through its margins (Pinelli, 2017).

During the previous decades of Palestinian exile in the region, the research about the institutional spatial politics imposed by the State authorities and refugees' spatial trajectories has constituted a relevant topic especially in the context of Palestinians camps located in Lebanon. With the arrival of numerous newly displaced people from Syria in precarious socio-economic conditions, how do the interactions between Palestinians and Syrians reshape new geographies and patterns of mobility between Dahiye and a Palestinian refugee camp?

4.2 Negotiating urban margins

In recent literature, the attention about refugee camps as separate exceptional spaces (Agamben, 1995) gradually moved to in depth analyses of the camp as an urban ethnographic case, highlighting how it is both a place of segregation implemented by the political authorities, and a place socially constructed by the relationships and interactions between the refugees and other subjects (Fontanari, 2017). In this context, "the urban impact of spaces like the refugee camps is the production of an ever more fragmented and atomized urban tissue" (Rieniets et al., 2009, 223). Along the Beirut southern suburbs, the human mobility patterns crossing the urban landscape of Dahiye daily intersect and overlap with the one performed by people who inhabit Bourj el-Barajneh camp.

As such, the analysis of refugees' socio-spatial mobility practices turns into a valid perspective to comprehend the articulations between the camp and its surroundings together with the daily renegotiations of Beirut urban suburbs. The ethnographic gaze sheds light on the tangible ways in which the State and its agencies exercise their powers, pinpointing the times, spaces and actors involved together with the specific ways "State practices" run through everyday life on the margins (Das, Poole, 2004). In this sense, the daily camp dwellers' shifting spatial practises must be framed within decades of refugee history (Peteet, 2005) and related negotiations with the enrolling neighbourhood.

A substantial example of everyday interactions between the camp dwellers and their surrounding environment can be retraced looking at the location of UNRWA's schools attended everyday by thousands of Palestinian children from the camp. It is really often while walking around the central road of the camp to bump into cars and mini-vans packed with students commuting to UNRWA schools. Located outside the camp and in the heart of the surroundings neighbourhoods, these schools engender a daily movement of the children from the camp to the city and contribute in breaking the closeness of the space of the camp (Habib, 2012).

Researching mobility practices in and around the refugee camps, my fieldwork had necessarily to be on the move, observing people's movements while simultaneously conducting ethnographic research (Urry, 2005). Since I was not living inside the camp during the first part of my research, I used to get Bourj el-Barajneh either by public transportation or driven on a scooter by a teammate living in Beirut. Researching about socio-spatial practices and mobilities between the camp and outside, the rides with Mohammed- a Palestinian living outside the camp but spending most of the free-time with former schoolmates living in the camp- were particularly relevant in providing me with a new light about the ambivalence of movement from the camp to the city.

As per the collective transportation, the adjacency with main roads together with a relatively functional and affordable transportation system allow the camp's dwellers to move between the camp and the working places in a quite functional way. Through small collected buses known as "Vans" that transit along the northern and western highways bordering of Bourj el-Barajneh, the camp dwellers' can cover relatively long distances and connects some of the most significant Beirut's intersections[99].

Moreover, along the southern and eastern boundaries of the camp, the various shops, owned either by Lebanese either by Palestinians, contribute to integrate the outer fringe of the camp into the urban landscape (Habib, 2012). This aspect is particularly

[99] My rides on these vans turned into a privileged source of observation during my daily commuting between my place and the camp, allowing me to retrace refugees' daily trajectories moving between the camp and their workplaces. An ethnography of the van number 4 as social urban phenomenon has been recently published online. For more, see A. Mohtar and P. Samaha, "Decoding an Urban Myth: An Inquiry into the Socio-Economics of Van Number 4 in Beirut", 07/01/2016. http://cci.jadaliyya.com/pages/index/23511/decoding-an-urban-myth_an-inquiry-into-the-socio-e

evident along the commercial area of "Annan Street", that borders Dahiye with the southern margins of the camp and was severely damaged during 2006-war events. While not being officially part of Bourj el-Barajneh camp, this area located on the camp's margins is inhabited also by many Palestinian families who could afford a housing solution less overcrowded and structurally precarious compared to the ones in the core of the camp. Due to its strategic location officially outside the camp but still part of the camp's social fabric, many new buildings have been recently built in order to satisfy the housing demands by numerous newcomers.

Mahmoud, a young Palestinian guy who has recently resettled with his family from Libya to Lebanon in order to escape the current turmoil around Tripoli, mentions:

Through the support of my uncles based in the Gulf we managed to buy this house: it is just at the door of the camp along the interconnection with Dahiye. Here the atmosphere is not as suffocating as in the core of the camp. If you want to identify this area, we just say that is close to Al-Khalil Restaruant. They do the best chicken farrouj[100] *in the city: everybody in Beirut knows it*[101].

Due to the lack of univocally recognized names of places, most of the streets are identified through significant reference points. Al-Khalil restaurant is well-recognized by everyone in Beirut southern suburbs as it delivers food 24 hours per day all around Beirut through tens of scooters driven by young male guys. Most of the messengers are (male) camp dwellers who work during the night-time at the end of their daily job in order to support their own families.

Niazy is one of them: I used to play football with him at late night, when he stops his duties at Al-Khalil and comes to the football field with some food for all the players: "We cannot survive and pay all the bills with just a salary: I have two children at home and I need to work from 7am to 10 in the evening to support my family. I am the deputy to deliver the food inside the camp: I was born inside here and I know by heart any single road and floor. We are the human GPS inside here[102]!".

In a small shop right in front of Al-Khalil Restaurant on the side of the camp,

[100] Chargrilled garlic chicken
[101] Mahmoud (December 2017, 1). Personal interview, Bourj el-Barajneh camp.
[102] Niazy (May 2016, 2). Personal interview, Bourj el-Barajneh camp.

Ghassan, one of Niazy's friends and among the Palestinian "historical" players of Al-Aqsa Team, has just inaugurated a "Cocktail & Crepes cafè".

I used to work as a waiter in a very elegant restaurant in Raouche. Job was very hard since we had to work around 14 hours per day, but at least the salary repaid all my efforts. However, during the last three years the boss has started employing more and more Syrians: it was more convenient to him. With the equivalent of my salary, that used to be around 600 dollar, he could afford two new employees. Two Syrians instead of one Palestinian. This is way I had to quit the job and opened my own activity here in Dahiye[103].

Such new configurations of Lebanon's workforce between "old" and "new" refugees and the consequent relocation of resources have often emerged throughout my fieldwork as far as it concerns both the residential and the commercial spaces. In this specific case, I was interested to understand why Ghassan had decided to invest in an activity out of "safe" perimeter of the refugee camp. Inquired about the choice of opening a shop in Dahiye instead of inside the camp, he replies:

Here the rent is more expensive, but at the same time we can propose more rewarding prices thatn inside the camp. Moreover, here it is the historical road of business in the area: it is plenty of people passing by during the whole day. It is plenty of Palestinian shops here: we just rent out spaces from the owners. Sometimes we even create a joint society where he just keeps the property of the shop, since we are not entitled by law to own our commercial activity. This is officially Dahiyeh but it looks like part of the camp. Look around you: we are all Palestinians[104].

This is also confirmed by the visual elements that pervade the public space along Annan street, where close to Hezbollah's posters one can easily recognized Palestinian martyrs and icons attached especially during important national recurrences such as the Day of the Land or the Nakba Day. Moreover, numerous camp dwellers refer to Dahiye as the privileged area for their socio-economic activities: "I buy just a

[103] Ghassan (March 2017, 21). Personal interview, Bourj el-Barajneh camp.
[104] Ibid

few things in the small shops of the camp while purchasing most of the items outside: food in Dahiye is so much tastier and healthier than here[105]". With his friends, he usually spends the night around the newly vibrant leisure sector in south Beirut, with a plethora of innovative cafés and restaurants that cater to a predominantly young, fashionable, middle- class, and more or less pious clientele (Leeb & Harb, 2013). In this sense, Hussein's accounts and daily practices introduce a polycentric conceptualization of the city, where neighbouring areas are materially and mentally connected with the social life of the camp.

Throughout my fieldwork, Mahmoud, Ghassan, and Niazy and Hussein helped me to enlighten how camp dwellers expand the physical and mental space of the camp far beyond the official boundaries of the camp. Such accounts push the discourse far beyond an abstract category of spatiality that seems discrete and self-explanatory between "the space of the camp" and "the space of the city". In this instance, "space is produced by a sovereign refugee subject whose action is intentional, volitional, agential; the connection between subjective action and objective consequence is direct and causal" (Abourahme, 2015:213) and assumes what I dare to define as a collective "trangressive" dimension.

4.3 Hierarchical spatialities

Inaugurated in March 2017, Ghassan's cafè has quite rapidly evolved in the habitual meeting place for Al-Aqsa team as it is on the way from the camp to the football field where we usually play official matches. Namely, the "Sahel football field" is located in the core of Haret Hreik, about one kilometre far from the camp and just adjacent with the Saint Joseph Church, that owns the terrain and gives the permission for its use to the local teams. This sandy 11-player football field is managed by the "Shabab al-Sahel Club", one of the historical Lebanese football teams founded in 1966 and currently member of the Lebanese Premier League[106]. Due to the low-quality

[105] Hussein (October 2016, 20). Personal interview. Bourj el-Barajneh camp
[106] For more info about the club, http://www.Shababbalsahel.net

surface and the scarce infrastructure of the stadium, the different team selections just use the Sahel field as a training and logistic facility, while they usually rent out another stadium in Beirut for the official matches purpose.

Figure 4: *Sahel Football Field during a night-training*. Beirut, 19/04/2017. Picture by the author

Due to the scarce utilization of the field by the major team, other "minor" local football teams are allowed to play in during the weekend and during some weekday evenings. Among the others, Al-Aqsa team has been training in Sahel since the inauguration of the team in the early Seventies. Beyond several interruptions during the troubles and the fighting during the Civil War, Al-Aqsa squads together with other clubs located in the area have been keeping playing in the Sahel field right until the July- 2006 war. Since Hezbollah's headquarters, its service institutions and a large portion of its constituency are located there (Haret Hreik municipality is located right in front of the football field), Israeli bombing razed an estimated 250 apartment buildings (Harb and Fawaz, 2010: 21).

Ahmad, one of my Palestinian teammates who have been playing with Al-Aqsa Team for 20 years, reminds those days while warming up inside the football field:

Just look around you: can you see all these buildings? These are all new: everything was raized to the ground in very few days. Everybody had left from here except for some Hezbollah fighters who were hiding inside the buildings. That was the real core of the war. Thanks God, the camp was not hit: we used to repair ourselves inside the houses and just sporadically reach the rooftop to check the situation. A solid smoke pervaded the atmosphere: it was just a matter of explosion sounds, black all around and splinters that reached the camp. For all of us who were children at that time, the real concern was being not allowed to play football at Sahel. The World Cup was just over, fireworks to celebrate Italy's win was rapidly substituted by bombs and there was nothing to do at home. Once the war was over we were the first ones who rushed to the football field to check the situation. Everybody was afraid of going back at that time. There was literally no one around and nothing if not ruins and smoke and electricity wires all over the area. Everything was abandoned. Therefore, we came here around the Sahel field and grabbed all the electricity wires and the metal in order to resell it to the black market. It was a good business: copper at those times was sold for 13-14 dollars per kilogram and we had around 10 kg each of us. We were teenagers and 150$ was a really great profit at that time.[107]

During that and many other occasions, many of my teammates used to recount several anecdotes linked to these war days as well as even their first trainings in Sahel Football year. In this way, they reaffirm a shared feeling of familiarity with such a space, which is located not just out of their space of confinement in the camp but even at the core of Dahiye, among the most securitized spaces in the country. Distancing from a predictable imaginary of mobility patterns exclusively deployed between the suburbs and the city-centre, such trajectories remark the necessity to take into considerations the "in-between spaces" by examining the importance of spatial configurations in relation to urban morphology and social relations (Can & Heath, 2015).

In Bourj el-Barajneh, the historical relatively high mobility between the camp and outside has been actually eased by the absence of permanent checkpoints. Although

[107] Ahmad (March 2017, 4). Personal interview, Sahel Football Field, Beirut.

the main entrances are presided by Lebanese Army's barracks, controls over human mobility is highly less strict than in other camps such as Ein el-Hilweh and Nahr el-Bared, which are regarded as more dangerous for the public security because of the political reasons expressed in the previous chapter. My fieldwork inside those camps showed to which extent refugees' agency and mobility has been primarily determined by their ID status through the asymmetric relation between the individual and the national institutions exercising their performativity of power.

Strictly connected with the spatial organization of spaces imposed by authority, the different legal status of "historical" and "newly displaced" refugees has thus important implications on the socio-spatial organization of this community in the Lebanon (Dorai, 2010). As previously reported in the case of Nahr el-Bared, since most refugees from Syria have been living in Lebanon without legal residency, the pervasiveness of these focal spaces start far beyond the crossing momentum. "A border is not simply a physical line [...] but an interactive space whose form is determined by the person crossing it" (Allan, 2014: 182). Because of the fear of being detained or arrested at the checkpoints, many people constantly reshape and modify their own movement patterns

Throughout my research, I observed how such spatial space disclipine imposed on the base of the legal status deeply impact refugees' daily life even while performing their leisure time. This is the case of Shabab Filistin team mentioned at the very beginning of the previous chapter, Majdi's Palestinian football team that is located in Shatila and rarely is invited to play some matches at the Sahel football stadium. In terms of distance, just two kilometres divide Shatila from the football field. However, the presence of several checkpoints along the way from the Airport Bridge to the core of Haret Hreik constitute a pervasive obstacle on the way to the stadium for several Syria's refugees void of any valid legal status in Lebanon. Majdi, the president of the Shabab Filistin team explains:

We have a lot of problems with the movements of our players: for example all the Syrians play with us do not go playing to Dahieh. For instance, they do not go to play at Shabab el Sahel's stadium because they are afraid they will be requested to show the

residency card. But they go to other stadiums, come to Shatila but do not go to Dahieh. They are afraid. At Dahieh you are asked: "show me "hawitaq" (your identity card). Here no one tells you anything like that while going to Qasqas, unless something happened like accidents, explosions, problems. But in Dahieh if they see you as new around the area they tell you 'give me your identity card. 'Suri? Fut al-habs'! (Syrian? Go to the jail!)[108].

During my active participation within Al-Aqsa Team dynamics, the daily trips from the camp to the stadium with my teammates were particularly relevant for investigating practices of mobility in the context of permanent strong securitization policies around al-Dahiye. Throughout my fieldwork, the dimension of leisure and play became an useful occasion to examine practices of spatial appropriation and the (re)production of new daily socio-cultural practices beyond the imposed margins of the camp. The days of Aashura - one of the most important Shia celebrations - traditionally constitute the epitome of such securitization measures, with checkpoints by Hezbollah and the Army pervading the whole area. During one of these days in October 2016, I was moving from the camp to the training field in Haret Hreik with Abu Ahmad, a 31-year Palestinian from Syria who fled to Lebanon at the end of 2012. He stated:

Before coming to Lebanon I was a professional football player in the Syrian League: in football as in all the other aspects of life, Palestinians in Syria were considered as locals and did not have any special preclusions. Here in Lebanon the system is completely different and we, considered as Palestinians and Syrians at the same time, are relegated out of the society. Most Palestinian-Syrians I know in the camp have left Lebanon during the last two years towards Europe. I decided to stay here and continue my career in Lebanon, but in football we -Palestinians from Syria- are considered as foreigners and are restricted from access. Because of that, I have not been able to find a team since I came to Lebanon and I am currently working "bil-assuad" (informally) as a trainer in a football academy.[109]

[108] Majdi (October 2017, 23). Personal interview, Shatila camp.
[109] Yazan (October 2016, 10). Personal interview, Bourj el-Barajneh camp

Right after crossing the footbridge over Al-Amliyah Road just beyond the entrance to the camp, a Hezbollah guard stopped us, asking: "*Ento suriyeen aw falastiniyeen*[110]?" Beyond the guard's initial surprise once I showed my Italian passport, Yazan declared being Palestinian and we were immediately released. Informal discussions following that episode - repeated several times during the next f days - were particularly relevant in shedding light on people's daily hurdles in a context of what I dare to conceptualise as "hierarchical spatialities"[111] imposed by Hezbollah around the camp.

The insights just described give leeway to formulate a notion of how performances of space excel in time and space through practices of control and regulations and *de facto* make borders pervasive for disadvantaged populations. In the specific situation of Lebanon's Palestinian camps, refugees from Syria state how they are constantly forced to reshape their own mobility patterns according to any specific location they cross. The checkpoints around the camps represent the material and psychological boundary between an inside "safe place" that risks being "frozen" from an outside that rather treats these spaces as "islands of insecurity" (Sayigh, 2000).

In this case, the control of the camp materialized by the physical presence of the Army overlaps with Hezbollah's militias in the area, pervasively conditioning refugees' life far beyond their ordinary activities. Dahiye's patronage under Hezbollah is exemplificative of how identities are experienced as crystallised around a sense of belonging predicated on hierarchically defined rights of access to territory, which then serve to stratify social groups according to the "perceived" national origin and belonging. Numerous interviewees confirmed that the ongoing Syrian war constitutes a turning point in the relational landscape around al-Dahiye. Among them, Souheil El-Natour, a Palestinian lawyer and researcher, explains:

Before 2011, Dahiye was perceived as a "friendly space" for Syrians moving around that space; Syrian citizens at Hezbollah checkpoints were privileged above Palestinians because [they were] considered "natural political allies". After the flow of about one

[110] "Are you Syrians or Palestinians?"
[111] The definition is inspired by recent geographers' studies on the spatial dynamics of collective resistance in contentious political activity. Among the others, Nicholls W., Miller B., and Beaumont J. (eds.) (2013). *Spaces of Contention: Spatialities and Social Movements*. London: Ashgate.

million of mainly Sunni refugees, Syrians somehow turned from allies to potential enemies, especially in the aftermath of the recent terrorist attacks striking Dahiye. In order to regain a favourable equilibrium and minimize the dangers, Hezbollah is currently investing in its relationship with Palestinians living in the camp to prevent them affiliating with Sunni extremist movements. Among the measures adopted, Palestinians are barely stopped at the checkpoint since Hezbollah does not want to have any problems with the Palestinians as happened a few years ago.[112]

El-Natour refers to an armed clash in 2013 between members of Hezbollah and Palestinian young men near the refugee camp after a wedding convoy refused to have their cars checked by Hezbollah armed guards close to the camp's entrance. After that one Palestinian man was shot dead by another young Hezbollah guard, the situation was pacified when some local leaders of party apologised to the victim's family and paid an indemnity (Rowell, 2013). Such singular incident was confirmed to me by Abou Khalil, who is both the responsible for the sport competitions in the camp as well one of the Palestinian deputies for the negotiations with the Lebanese authorities[113].

Therefore, while allegiances and affiliations among regional actors are reshaped by the events of the Syrian war, daily mobility has been hierarchically reframed according to the national and (several times) sectarian belonging of the individuals. Beyond the issue of legal national documents, the linguistic variations of Arabic dialects spoken by Palestinians and Syrians also constitute an additional discriminating factor, contributing to outline a further porous picture. Along these several temporalities of displacements, Palestinians of Syria stand in a equivocal situation: they find themselves at the boundaries between a subjective reformulation of historical, cultural and political belonging in a precarious socio-political context mainly dominated by adverse authorities.

[112] Souheil El-Natour (October 2016, 26). Personal interview, Mar Elias camp.
[113] Considered as a sort of moral and political authorities in the camp, I was introduced to him several times along my presence in the camp both as al-Aqsa player as well as one of the few foreigners who used to frequent the camp without the intermediation of any foreign or local organization. In this sense, he was often invited both to our matches and important meetings or events, such as in the case of the funerals of one of our former teammates.

The whole debate endlessly risks recapitulating an agency versus structure problematic, in which the latter is always cast as a negative, restraining effect on human action. How do individuals with a precarious social and legal background wiggle out of such socio-spatial hierarchizations? While observing the logics of exclusion set at the margins of the camp, an ethnography focusing on these areas has the potential to show how margins are experienced in unexpected and creative ways (Pinelli, 2017). An insight into Yazan's personal biography sheds a light on the gap between institutional categorizations and the daily practices on the ground:

After being stuck for two years in a unfavourable condition preventing me from working with football and creating me problems at the checkpoint, a teammate informed me about the possibility to buy a new identity from a Palestinian of Lebanon who left for Europe few months before. In this way, just through sticking my picture instead of the original one, now with my documents I can move more easily than before. Moreover, according to these new documents I am 25 years old and being younger also means that I got more chances to be employed by Lebanese teams. Few weeks ago I signed a contract with a team playing in the fourth division: 1.000 dollars every three times. It is not that much but, together with the job as a trainer, I can maintain my self just through football [114]

Even when subjectivity is addressed from a biographical point of view, it is not limited to an account of the person's intimate or private dimension. Quite the opposite, it becomes the pretext for illustratingthe structural dynamics that produce exclusion, vulnerability and marginality (Pinelli, 2017). Yazan's solution shows how "refugees creatively impose their own imprint on the space and meaning of the camps in a manner that, if not oppositional to the apparatus of control, at least serve as obstacles to its full realization". (Peteet, 2005: 94). In this sense, their imaginative and practical work of transgressing the hierarchical spatialities imposed by the local authorities is neither purely emancipatory not entirely disciplined but is a space of contestation (Appadurai, 1996).

[114] Yazan (October 2016, 10). Personal interview, Bourj el-Barajneh camp

Yazan's trajectory contributes to enlighten practices and narratives of transcending the spatial marginalization imposed by both State and non-State actors far beyond the peculiar case of Palestinian camps in Lebanon. In this regard, the spatialization imposed on refugees' mobility is continuously contrasted by encroachment practices, which do not limit the refugees to avoid border-space but permit themselves to constantly modify and re-invent such "in-between" spaces.

4.4 Reinventing spaces for playing?

The reformulation of his own legal position within the socio-spatial landscape does not univocally depend on individual solutions: most of the decisive contacts for obtaining the new documents inexorably passed through his teammates and other people met on the football fields. The flow of information and negotiations intersected a sort of virtual platform involving Palestinians of Syria, Syrians, and Palestinians from Lebanon living within and outside the camp. The power networks in which refugees move, act and carry out their practices reveal the forms of subjection these actors face, as well as their "condition of possibility" (Butler, 1997). In Yazan's case, football is the key-factor: it is both the goal and the tool.

After playing football on the streets since I was born, the first club I played with was al-Majd Club in Damascus. I consider myself as a "Majdawi", a Majd supporter. Which team do you support, Brescia? I am exactly as you, but I support Majdi. However, since my roots are Palestinian-gazawi born in Syria, I was considered foreigner according to the football laws at all levels: there was no way to play. However, I have kept training with them for several years. The management of the club used to tell me that I was a really talented player, one of the best of the young team. Some of my former teammates currently play in the Syrian national team. Do you know Zaher al Midani and Raja Rafed? They played with me: Raja is just one year older than me. But for me there was no chance to play as a foreigner: I quitted football and focused on job until the beginning of the war. I left Syria to Lebanon very early, it was May 2011. During the first three years here in Lebanon I have never played football: I did not anyone both here in the camp and outside that used to play football. As a foreigner in another country, I settled down where I was told there were a lot of Palestinians from Syria

living in that area of the camp. Just after three years I met some Palestinians guys from Syria who used to gather for playing football. We started going out together, watch other people playing and enter into condifence even outside the football field. Then we established a team together: a small one, in order to play just five players plus the goalkeeper. Most of us were Palestinians from Syria but both the coach and some players were Syrian citizens also from Damascus are: this is why we called it "Al-Majd" in order to honour our favourite team in Syria. Match by match we have become more and more proficient until we started playing 11-player matches at Nejmeh and Ansar football team. Do you remember? Here is how we started: we just organize the match on whatsapp few hours before the match. Last year we won the football tournament here in the camp, while we lost the semifinals at Ansar field and we won some tournaments in Saida. I toured several fields around Lebanon with that team: people started looking at me and observing my skills. Since Abou Tareq, our coach at al-Majd here in Lebanon, was also linked to al-Aqsa team here in Bourj el-Barajneh, I was asked to join the Palestinian team. During the first months I was a reserve and used to enter the field just during the second half. But just at the first match with them, as soon as I replaced my teammates I scored two goals, thanks God. I am a striker, I must score goals. This is why the club management has rapidly included me in the roster to play official matches both in Sahel and around the whole Lebanon[115].

Yazan's sport biography suggests us to which extent thinking through the city from the lens of "play" provides us with a new way of seeing its spaces. Yazan's description of the football matches played around the several football fields in Beirut shows how young male adults, opening up the dichotomy between child and adult, learn the city through play. Over the last decades, playgrounds around the world have been studied by sociologists, theorists of art and architecture, and psychologists (Lefaivre et al., 2002). In this sense, outdoor-play practices turn into forms of spatial appropriation and reproduction that extend beyond the confines of time and place, and spill over to embody borderless play in the city (Hatem, 2016).

Arguably, play is a form of knowledge about the spaces where the practice occurs through imaginative, often spontaneous actions linked to everyday encounters (Hatem,

[115] Yazan (June 2017, 11). Personal interview, Bourj el-Barajneh camp.

2016). Yazan's narrative thus shows how, struggling with such a multi-levelled hostile context, refugees manage to mobilize resources among a various spectrum of networks. While a meaningful part of the literature conceives Palestinian camps as spaces mainly socially organized through familiar and political relations, my fieldwork permitted me to investigate in which extent alternative dimensions such as free time activities pinpointed in a spatial perspective reveal original modalities of reinventing mobility practices and shaping new social identities.

In this sense, the football fields turn into arenas where social space has the potential to be dynamically reinterpreted and to reconfigure the urban geographies far beyond the leisure time. Here I do not conceive football as the mediatized global modern sport tied to a system of global institutions, rather as a daily "simple playing of games" (Bourdieu, 1978) linked to the need for creative activity, the imaginary, and play (Lefebvre, 1996). Throughout my fieldwork football revealed an opportunity to investigate the right to participate, the right to appropriate, the right to complete usage of moments and places When carefully observed and studied along such a perspective, play and playfulness in the public realm can be a very useful perspective, different in logic from current modes of consultation and participation regarding the production of public space (Charif & Hafeda, 2017).

Unsurprisingly, many valuable researches about play and the production of public space have been currently focusing on Beirut, a city that provides little space for the practice of sports and is probably one of the most unfriendly playful cities. Al-Masri's ethnography (2016) into Beirut-based football clubs from a socio-spatial perspective shed light on the negotiation and the reformulation of the city's spaces, images and identities within the city. Through examining the sets of relations within Nejmeh club -the most famous and supported football team in Lebanon-, her research show how identities over spatial boundaries are negotiated in a city where you can hardly find very few public play for the capital's two-million citizens[116].

[116] With 300,000 m² of green space within municipal Beirut, Horsh Beirut is the largest and most well-known park in the city. Located on the demarcation line that divided Beirut into two conflicting zones during the Lebanese Civil War, it was heavily damaged and later on bombed by Israeli airstrikes. Just after 25 years the park has reoponed under the pressure of local organizations. However, the renegotiations between Beirut Municipality and local citizens over the use of the park have not been settled yet. In this sense, after the Municipality's intention to build an hospital within its purposes, the

While most of the major teams had their own privately owned or rented venues (such as in the case of Shabab al-Sahel club described before), which spaces are left to the everyday "simple playing of games" informally performed everyday by thousands of people? In this sense, it is common to see people spontaneously playing football in every kind of location, from closed-streets to parking spots within the perimeter of abandoned buildings. This is the so-called *futbal al-shawari'a* (street football), a peculiar sport which where Beirut's people may be considered appropriate interpreters indeed.

In Beirut, even the few spaces left to street football are constantly threatened by the rush urbanization that is pervading every area of the city. Through the comparison between two aerial maps of Beirut taken in 2003 and in 2015, the already-mentioned Dictaphone Group's research deduced that 85% of informal football fields in 2003 no longer exist and mostly turned into parking lots, buildings, or construction sites. Through an urban ethnography of several playgrounds as public social spaces in the city, they show how the intrinsic relation of these fields with the history of the neighbourhoods, mobility of players across geo-political borders, and communities, provide a citywide interest to preserve and sustain these dynamic pockets (Hatem, 2016).

Among the several locations analysed and attended during my research, I had the opportunity to collaborate with Dictaphone Group in occasions of several meetings organized by them and a local football team in Mar Elias Palestinian camp about the destination of the football field. After that the former football field where the youth from the Camp used to play football became a construction site in 1997, 20 football players from the camp decided to fix up the big adjacent piece of land nearby, which was at different points in time either a waste land or a parking lot.

On the same way, the "Play Space project" implemented in 2005 by Febrik collective[117] is an interesting example of how public spaces in the Palestinian refugee

Council of Ministers changes the zoning of part of Horsh of Beirut from non-aedificandi to constructible. The youth-led organization Nahnoo has been monitoring the evolution of Horsh Beirut since 2010. http://nahnoo.org

[117] *Febrik* is a not-for-profit collaborative platform for participatory art and design research projects with practicing architects, designers and artists active in the Middle East and the UK. The *Play Space* project

camp Bourj el-Barajneh were transformed by children in spaces where to play in the absence of any childhood spaces within the camp. Looking at how children in the camp appropriate public and private adult spaces through the re-use or misuse or recycling of architectural camp elements, this art-based research and design project showed how refugees inside the camp innovatively respond to limited resources and relate to each other and to their environment (Charif, & Hafeda, 2017).

Such dynamics of negotiations and (re)appropriations of open-air spaces assume a specific significance when they are performed within Lebanon's Palestinian camps, where the historical contractions of spaces and the increased crowding (as the population grew but camp boundaries could not expand) might appear an invincible obstacle to playing. Feldman's research among the Palestinian old generations in Bourj el-Barajneh camp recollects how "where once there were open spaces to play, a neighbour was now pressed right up against you" (Feldman, 2017: 1).

It is just enough to tour around any Palestinian camp in the country to see hundreds of children and young adults to play football at any available corner of the camp. Inquired about his first memories of playing in the camp, my teammate Nassar reminds: "Football is everything in my life since the beginning. But how can you play here in the camp? As Palestinians in Lebanon we do not have any space in the country. When we were young, in the camp there was a field with stones and no grass. There were no football fields and no football academies such as now. We just wore our clothes and went down into the streets to play in the *zawarib* (narrow streets) . Look around: children keep on playing *Futbal Shawari'a* (street football) even if now we have a real football field in the camp[118]."

is composed of two complementary stages. The first, an individual research enquiry, building on the children's existing invented (at times also inherited and modified) games and exploring how they have been made possible by the camp's spatial and social organization. The second, a propositional group exercise, sought to intervene in the camp's spatial structure through the creation of a series of play interventions proposed for play in the camps; these set up a temporary landscape of play or a new transient and fragmented playground. http://febrik.org/play-space

[118] Nassar (March 2018, 11). Personal Interview, Bourj-el-Barajneh camp.

Figure 5: *Young guys on the way back from football training.*
Bourj el-Barajneh camp, 15/10/2018. Picture by the author.

4.5 The Hamas Field:

4.5.1. A "conceived space" for playing in the camp

The "real football field" mentioned by Nassar has become my second home throughout the fieldwork in the camp since the day entered it during a sunny morning of summer in 2015. While randomly walking around the camp from the entrance located on the Airport Road, I bumped into a metal-covered large construction that dominates the area. Sieged around by several multi-floor buildings that have been keeping on growing in the area, this artificial grass- football field has immediately attracted my curiosity. The football field is designed to host 6-player team matches such as per many other private venues that were inaugurated along the Airport Highway during the last decade. As far as I entered the large metallic door of the premise, a young guy got closer and asked me the reason of my visit to the camp and to that football field.

My mixed reactions of enthusiasm for having found such a place in an unexpected space and my hesitation revealed decisive to be identified as stranger even before getting a word in. After explaining my national background and the fortuity of such an encounter, I was warmly welcomed by Ehab and invited to play football inside the field with other few guys. It was just during my farewell-dinner from the team, just after more than three years since our first encounter, that I dared asking Ehab his first

impressions about that Italian who had entered the football field in a refugee camp without apparently any reason. In front of the whole team, he reveals:

For sure I remember that day even if a lot of time passed meanwhile. He arrived exhausted with a broken rucksack while some young guys were playing. He came to me and I asked him what he was taking picture at and why he was in the camp. He told me he was passing by after having attended a meeting at one of the associations in the camp. He wanted to know who used to play there because he was really crazy for football. At that point I wondered; "He is Italian and loves football: I should bring him to play with us at Al-Aqsa! I invited him to join people in the field in order to check what he could do with football. He had nice shot skills and some interesting skills, so once he left I asked him to come back for the training in the evening. Since that moment he is part of the team and. He did not do anything good for us (laughing)! Indeed, nothing at all (general laughing)![119]

Throughout my presence in the camp I have kept wondering how such a decisive encounter for my fieldwork resulted as a coincidence of several trajectories, and especially how my national belonging revealed fundamental in order to be considered suitable for football at first glance. However, after the first meeting with Ehab, I should have returned to the field the day after in order to go for a trail. Therefore, before leaving that unknown football field and going back home, I took note of the inscription printed out on the arch dominating the entry of the field: *Malab Akademia Ajel Al Awda* (The Generation of Return's Football field).

I wanted to get sure to be able to go back to the field the day after, since that day I had accidentally bumped into the field after walking inside the maze narrow streets of the camp. But once I was back and starting asking around the indication for the The Generation of Return's Football field and academy, no one could direct me towards the place. At a certain point, I started wondering if the day before I had misunderstood the cognition of time and place. Just after numerous failed requests for help around the camp, a young guy drove me in front of the right football field. After pointing out at the inscription as a way to discharge for my bizarre request, he replied:

[119] Ehab (November 12, 2017). Informal talking with teaamates, Bourj el-Barajneh camp.

"Do not pay attention at the name, Next time you need to come here and you get lost, just ask around for the *Maleb al-Hamas* and everybody will direct you to here[120]."

It was just after several months of training and different occasions spent with my new teammates and people who worked in the facility that I have started unveiling some of the multi levels of implicit codes of conduct. This is part of what Peteet calls 'the social production of space [that] arose from building in the camp and sharing its space, naming its areas, participating in its new social institutions' (Peteet, 2005: 130). The original name of the football field refers to the local football academy that was created as a direct emanation and management of the football field. But how extend could such a space appear in a refugee camp and why was it renamed the Hamas Football Field? It was Yemen, one of the guys who had immediately appeared as one of the most charismatic figures in the field, who revealed me the genealogy of such a structure.

I am one of the owners of this structure: we are four business partners who decided to create the football field in the camp. As you can see, there was no possibility for our children to play inside the camp and we had to rent out a field around Dahiye or along the fields on the Airport Road. Therefore we gathered money both from our savings and from some support in the diaspora: such a kind of structure is really expensive. At the end it cost us around 80.000$, included the coverture and the provision for a cafeteria that should be inaugurated soon. This field has been open just for 3 years now but you can see how many people play here. Now we as Palestinians do not need to go outside the camp for playing football. Quite the contrary, there are more and more people who live outside and come to play here because the rent for such a kind of modern artificial grass-surface is cheaper than anywhere else in Beirut[121].

Since most of the businessmen in the joint venture are unavoidably recognized as local Hamas members, among the camps' inhabitants the football field is informally referred as "The Hamas Field" to suggest that the field is a direct emanation of the Palestinian party. However, in terms of the visual

[120] Amin (September 11, 2015). Bourj el-Barajneh camp.
[121] Yemen (February 2017, 13). Personal interview, Bourj el-Barajneh camp.

communication that the owners want to convey to the outsiders, one cannot not notice any banners or even signals related to Hamas and its affiliated institutions. In my case, just a long period of in-depth observation and numerous relations with its players and managers allowed me to win their trust and hook into the non-written codes of the football field.

Among the several teammates, with whom I used to spend time before and after playing football, I have rapidly entered into confidence with Khaled. He is a 20-year old Palestinian guy, a very skilled left-wing football player with an absolute terrific fascination for AC Milan football team. We have spent numerous nights together to watch Italian football on a small television located in the office of the football field. In fact, together with Ehab, he was uncharged to guarantee the regular functioning of the field: managing the booking, fixing eventual ruptures and providing players with technical materials and selling out some fresh drinks from the fridge located in the field's office. Since the beginning I could notice how, despite of his young age, Khaled was considered as one of the reference persons in that space.

This has been my second home since I was a child. After the dismantling of the factory in 2014, this abandoned land became a parking spot for the camp dwellers. It was me, my father, and my brothers who used to manage this space. The parking was even recognized as the "Muqaf el Turk"(Turk Parking) *because it was my family managing the space 24 hours per day. However, we were not the owner of the land and the activity. Who owned the parking is the same business collective that currently owns the football field. I guess that it was a good choice: football is more profitable than cars!*[122]

[122] Khaled (June 2017, 11). Personal interview, Bourj el-Barajneh camp.

Map5 : *Map of Bourj el-Barajneh (2012)*(Source, Elisabeth Habib).
The cinder block factory indicated in the map was demolished in order to host the football field.

Given the wide appeal of football, self-made fields appropriated at the scale of neighbourhoods provide one of the best opportunities to observe the production of "public space" from below (Hatem, 2016). Moving from Lefebvre's triadic model (1991) for understanding space, adopted also by Deeb and Harb (2013) in the ethnographies of Beirut's southern suburbs- cafés, we need to look at the Hamas Field as a "conceived space" because it is planned, designed, and managed by different groups of people, including political parties, religious organizations, and private entrepreneurs.

Worldwide, sport has been found to facilitate social development in a variety of contexts; typically where people's social and political differences would have prevented participation and sharing in the sport experience (Riordan, 1991; Kugelmass, 2007). Football, in particular, has been used to promote "peace" in a number of socially and politically tense environments (Sorek, 2007), including the Palestinian camps in Lebanon especially after the arrival of new refugees from Syria. This is for instance the case of the association ANERA's playground and a football field site located in the

middle of Nahr el-Bared refugee camp, managed by a local association partnered with the donor[123]. Bayan, ANERA's Communication Officer, reveals:

We have been currently working on the rehabilitation of several sport fields with the support of local communities that are supposed to be the responsible of the premises once the maintenance is done. ANERA focuses on youth currently out of school (14-22 years old), targeting any kind of nationality in order to promote life skills and conflict resolutions. As per children on the age of 10-14 years old, we promote football projects including life-skills activities. By "education" ANERA includes several activities and projects, including 2 sport programs. One is the Youth joint program for education and sport funded by UNICEF: football projects are normal football trainings that include 5 minutes of life-skills training. Then we also have "Football 3" program (Beirut, Beqaa and South), also funded by UNICEF and other partners. "Football 3" is not mere football, it is a matter of fair play.[124]

Along this perspective, spaces like these ones are mostly financed by international donors whose logo and advertisements are particularly evident all around the facility. This is not the case of the Generations of the Return Football Field, where the only images you can notice all around the field portray Messi and Ronaldo and few other worldwide famous football players. According to my extended expertise with sport premises located inside Lebanon's refugee camps, the "Hamas field" is the only case of leisure space for refugees not directly supported by any international NGOs or UN Agencies. Rather, the choice of these businessmen to dismantle the factory into a temporary parking spot and subsequently to build up a private football field revealed to be motivated by a mere commercial logic. In all these regards, the visual impact of the Hamas Field depicts a sport facility dominated by commercial purposes more than any humanitarian goals that an external spectator would expect to meet inside a refugee camp. Interviewed during one training event organized in Beirut by the Italian football coaches association, the owner Yemen remarks:

[123] https://www.anera.org/priorities/parks-and-playgrounds/
[124] Bayan (July 10, 2017). Personal interview, Beirut.

When we inaugurated the field, we did want to fill an historical gap in the camp. We were not interested in any kind of collaboration with associations or NGOs that rule everywhere in spaces like these ones: our focus was football. This is why we welcome initiatives like these one where partners are football societies, not just NGOs that use football as a tool. We have been looking for several football societies around the globe for equal partnerships, where their coaches come here to train our coaches and the children and we can even benefit from their football facilities in Europe or anywhere else. [125]

With the refusal of the humanitarian logic and narrative, such a choice contributes to de-exceptionalize the "humanitarian orientation" governing Lebanon's Palestinian camps and makes such space more similar with numerous other private football fields located in the city. Beyond reserving the field for its own team around three hours per day, the Academy rents out the space for 60.000 LBP (40$) each half an hour. A really competitive price if we compare it with the football fields located in the area outside the camp, especially if we considered the numerous private fields built along the Airport Road during the last ten years. For instance, at the nearby "Classico" located on the Airport Road the price is equal, but with a lower quality of the surface and the maintenance of the field. Can a football field inside a refugee camp turn into an attractive fun space far beyond it geographical and social perimeter?

4.5.2 A familiar space for the newcomers

Since its establishment in May 2015, the football field has rapidly become a real attraction point for the thousands of people in the southern Beirut area Following Lefebvre's category of perceived spaces within the triadic model of understanding space, we cannot deny how the geographical location of the football field constitutes the real added value to its economic success. The Hamas Football field is the only one available inside the camp and exercises a sort of "monopoly" on the sporting activities of the camp dwellers, most of the Palestinian national recurrences attended by thousands people among the camp dwellers are usually staged within its premises.

[125] Yemen (October 11, 2017). Personal interview, Bourj el-Barajnej camp.

Since this football field became the only large covered open-air space except for the cemetery, such space has been becoming a headquarter for several events that used to gather hundreds of people, such as in the case of national commemorations or wedding parties. Such a space turns into what Lefebvre conceptualizes as "lived space", since its socially experienced by people, and generate informal collective practices and congeniality among its attenders. The Hamas football field has rapidly become an alternative gathering spaces where people from different national backgrounds and temporalities of exile regularly meet and recreate a sort of familiarity.

During the regular schedule, from 10am to 3pm the field is mostly free especially for children who would like to play. Ehab, who is appointed to opening the premise in the morning, explains: "They should pay 1.000 lira everyday, but this is not always the case. Most of them are Syrians because most of the Palestinian children attend school in the morning, while they either do not go or attend the class in the afternoon. Here is like being at school, a football school but still[126]." Within a general landscape made up of hierarchical spatialities delineated in the previous pages, football trainers become key figures to build social and cultural relations between Palestinian and Syrian young guys. In this context, a football field gathers that gathers people from different backgrounds and with distinct levels of inclusion inside a refugee camp turns into a privileged place where the players can experiment through playing new and original modalities of inclusion and co-existence. (Gandolfi, Fogliata, 2018)[127].

In the late afternoon, after the Academy's regular trainings, several self-organized teams usually rent out the field two times per week. Most of the numerous informal teams that used to rent out football fields in Dahiye had turned down to prefer the so-called Hamas Field for their weekly matches since its inauguration. If we exclude some Palestinian football teams from the camp that regularly rent the field for their weekly trainings, most of the players who attend the Hamas Field are currently Syrian nationals who have settled in the area since 2011. Most of them are self-organized teams made by young males who, such as in the case Yazan described before, rent the field once or twice per week.

[126] Ehab (October 2016, 20). Personal interview, Boj el-Barajneh.
[127] About the education value of sport for the social inclusion, see Zoletto D. (2010). *Il duro gioco dell'integrazione*. Milano: Cortina.

Abou Ammar, a Syrian man in his fifties, is unavoidably recognized in the camp as the guiding light for the Syrian players in the area. In 2017 he inaugurated the Syrian Football Academy, that gathers up more than two hundreds children and teenagers who usually train at the Ansar football field not far from the camp.

Most of our players are Syrian and Palestinians from Syria who live all around Beirut. It is a long history: most of the coaches used to train young professional teams in Syria and now we are trying to establish something here in Lebanon. But we also have several Palestinian and even some Lebanese players: they do not mind about the name of the team, but they are interested in the high level of our academy. You cannot compare the level of football in Syria with the one in Lebanon: we were ten times better than here[128].

The Syrian Academy has established since 2016 a sort of cooperation with the Generations of Return Academy: some of the coaches also train the local team while some Palestinian players go to play some matches with Abou Ammar. He has even established in the Hamas Football Field a local competition, renamed "Syrian Cup", that gathered 16 self-organized teams usually training in the field. While the competition was not by law exclusively reserved for Syrian citizens, it was really hard to find out some Palestinian player within the several squads. While assisting to the final match of the Syrian League attended by hundreds of people crowded along the metal fence that separates the field from the spectators' area, Khaled commented: "Just look around you and tell me if you recognize any person from the camp: they are all Syrians. This field, such as the whole camp, has become Syrian, but they do not even know what means building up a camp from zero[129]".

While the emphasis on the newcomers' massive presence in the Palestinian camp has been already discussed in the previous chapters, I have been wondering why many newcomers chose to organize their sport activities in the Hamas Football Field. Abou Ammar as well as many other players in the field seem to be quite convinced on the issue: "Here the surface is very professional if you compare with the other fields

[128] Abou Ammar (March 2017, 23). Personal Interview, Bourj el-Barajneh camp.
[129] Khaled (June 2017, 11). Personal interview, Bourj-el-Barajneh

around, and there is even space to rest and to drink coffee and chat. And last but not least, most of my players prefer playing inside the camp because here they do not feel threatened."[130]

Figure 6: *Awards cerimony of the "Syrian Cup" inside the Hamas Football Field.*
Bourj el-Barajneh camp. 17/11/2017. Picture by the author.

Despite of being recognized and renamed as a space with a precise political affiliation, the Hamas Football Field is perceived and lived as a safe space by all its attenders beyond the national and factional membership. Brady (2005) highlights two themes that she believes are critical to the cultivation of safe spaces in and through sport: safe mobility, group formation and social networks. The first one is evoked by the fact that not all the players live in the camp: during my fieldwork in the field I have actually met people from all around Beirut. Beyond them, several teams are made up of players who live in different location and use the Hamas Football Field as their gathering point. Surprisingly, a refugee camp turns into a space for play and leisure

[130] Abou Ammar (March 2017, 23). Personal Interview, Bourj el-Barajneh camp.

time even for non-camp dwellers, who expressly commute to Bourj el-Barajneh camp for playing football inside the Hamas Field.

Such a socio-spatial trajectory, in this sense, allows us to reinterpret in an ambivalent direction the mobility patterns between the city and the camp. Beyond the camp residents who leave the camp for their daily occupations, we also need to include within our analysis the trajectories of people who interpret and perform a Palestinian refugee camp as an attractive space. Through ludic activities such as football, "new" and "old" refugees experiment peculiar feelings of familiarity belonging in respect with a "magnetic and repellent space" (Fiddian-Qasmiyeh & Qasmiyeh, 2013) such as a refugee camp.

Indeed, the second aspect of safe space – group formation and social networks – is principally concerned with the psychological dimension of a safe space (Spajj and Schulenkorf, 2014). Brady (2005) contends that sport can play a particularly beneficial role in the group formation and the provision of a sense of affiliation and belonging. This is the case of the Hamas Field, with tens of people who gather inside the premises of the field before or after the matches to chat and talk. Yazan's biography mentioned before is emblematic of the multiple connections that emerge in such a space and spill over the world of football. "We spend a lot of time here in the field: it is much more confortable any other gathering spaces in the camp. When you do not know what to do after work, you just pass by here and you will be sure that you will meet someone with whom spending the evening and watching some football"[131].

Borrowing from Spajj's work on safe spaces and sport, the sociocultural dimension of safe space is an "implied desired goal of familiarity: such that the people, practices and relations that exist within a safe space are comfortable and familiar" (Hunter, 2008, p. 8). Such a familiar space turns into a showcase where several coaches and managers find the possibility to scout players who are usually out of the official football channels. Among the different (Lebanese, Palestinian and Syrian) clubs that monitor this space, Al-Aqsa team has a sort of priority since the club is somehow "twined" with the local Accademy that manages the Hamas Field.

Throughout my participation within the team I observed in depth the everyday

[131]Yazan (April 2018, 10). Personal interview, Bourj el-Barajneh camp.

logics of exclusion/ inclusion and the reformulation of alliances among players from several national, political and class backgrounds. Al-Aqsa team turned into a privileged playful arena, where Palestinian, Syrian and Lebanese players need to renegotiate their presence and role in a football field clearly demarcated with a Palestinian political faction inside the camp. In this sense, how does a monopoly on the sport facilities inside the camp contribute to emphasise Hamas' political perception and interacts with the presence of the newcomers from Syria who are mostly alien to the intra-Palestinian political divisions?

4.6 "Al-Aqsa Team was here before Hamas"

Such informal practices of renegotiations of spaces and roles between newly displaced and historical refugees hit a high spot with the participation inside "Al-Aqsa" which might therefore been observed, in my opinion, as a sort of "laboratory", whose relevance along my research has extended far beyond the perimeter of the football field. *Al Nadi al-Aqsa Al-Riyadi* (Al-Aqsa Sport Club) is a Palestinian sport club funded in the 1981 from the initiative of few members from Bourj el-Barajneh who were already into other sport associations of that time. Among them, the already mentioned Abou Khaled was the historical founder and is still recognized in the camp as one of the most influent and respectful persons in the camp.

In spite the war and problems in the camps those were great times for Palestinian football. At that time there were so many talented players and the matches were plenty of people every time. We started with a very limited number of children that we used to train in an abandoned field on the airport road, but as soon as the news circulated around there were hundreds of people who joined the trainings. There were not so many teams and academies as now. We started collecting some money around in order to buy jerseys, shoes and balls. In a few years we became among the best Palestinian teams in Lebanon![132]

[132] Abou Khaled (September 2017, 30). Informal talks with teaamates, Bourj el-Barajneh camp.

Despite the age and some health problems, Abou Khaled usually spends the evenings at the Hamas Field to watch some football and joins the conversations: any child or adult who gets into the Hamas field greets him before anyone else. Throughout my presence in the camp I have joined hundreds of these "roundtables", informal gatherings made up of around ten persons among the ones linked either to the team or to Hamas (or both). International football, local teams and daily life concerns in the camp: these were the most debated issues along these talks that in most of the cases ended just in the core of the night, when the football field had already closed stopped at 11 pm and Khaled had to stay overnight in the office to guarantee the security.

Beyond Khaled and his father, these roundtables used to gather most of the al-Aqsa players, among whom the already mentioned teammates Rami, Yazan, Louay, Yemen, Amin. The picture is then completed by Saleh (al-Aqsa coach), and the other members of the team's board: the president Abed and Abou Tareq, a Syrian man who revealed as a decisive gate-keeper between the "historical" core of al-Aqsa and the new players and members from Syria. Moreover, during summer time such informal gatherings usually become the occasion to meet many of the former camp residents (and former players) who left Lebanon for northern Europe countries since many years.

During one of the first Ramadan evenings in July 2017, these guys decided to organize a friendly match play in the Hamas Field to celebrate the beginning of the Holy Month. From one side, Rami had invited several Palestinian-Syrian and Syrian players, among which Loyay, Yazan and Amin. From the other, Yemen had gathered the Palestinian core of the team made up of several middle-aged men and sheiks publically affiliated with Hamas. Many children from the local Academy "Generations of the Return" wanted to attend a match that seemed to demonstrate the local popularity of the team and the prestige of the party. In this sense, Rami explained to me: "This is a friendly match: we all know each other, we are all from Hamas and we do not need referees. We just stop even one second before committing any foul against one of our comrades"[133]. Such remark sounds here even more evocative if we consider the high level of aggressiveness usually adopted by the players throughout any kind of matches.

[133] Rami (July 11, 2017). Talks in the football field, Bourj el-Barajneh camp.

Indeed, in spite of some sporadic sportively speaking tense episodes erased by the same Rami, the match has concluded in a very friendly way with the final celebrations and greetings in the courtyard of the Hamas Field. The match combined the overwhelming popularity of football that has some of the features of a religious ceremony through the presence of religious and political leaders in the camp. However, in terms of visibility and communication, an outsider would have not perceived any connection with a political party: no logos, no mentions and no references to Hamas have appeared into the field throughout the whole match. Indeed, while one may expect some of the party's posters and banners and spread all over the camp, such expressions of identity and affiliations have never publically appeared during the whole period of my fieldwork.

Unsurprisingly, such conveyed message massively appear inside the Al-Aqsa offices, that are located in a narrow road of the camp 100 meters far from Hamas Field. Beyond the training field for the Al-Aqsa Karate team, this multi-stored building is open just in the occasion of official meetings or receptions organized by the club in occasion such as the Iftar dinners during Ramadan. The interior wall of the office are covered with Hamas posters portraying the party's martyrs and leaders, together with the official picture of the team's players and the trophies won throughout the decades.

While opening the door of the office to outsiders, such as in the case of *Footballization* shootings, the president Abed never explicitly mentions Hamas even when he indicates the posters or Sheikh Yassin's portray[134]. In this sense, spaces such as the Hamas football field and the Al-Aqsa Team offices are reinterpreted according to the contingency of its attendees and interlocutors. This is why the most interesting anecdotes to unveil the connections between the party and the football team have emerged during our informal talks at late night as in the case of the post-match.

[134] Sheikh Ahmed Ismail Hassan Yassin (1937 – 22 March 2004) was the Palestinian imam who officially founded Hamas in 1987.

Figure 7: *Graffiti at the entrance of Al-Aqsa office*. On the top, "Hamas 29" to celebrate the 29th anniversary of the faction. At the center,Hamas' logo. At the bottom, "Al-Aqsa Sport Club". Bourj el-Barajneh camp, 22/03/2018. Picture by the author.

After most of the players and sheikhs had left the field, the debate among Khaled, his father, coach Saleh and Rami dealt with the future destination of part of the abandoned courtyard located behind the field and supposed to become, according to the initial plans, a cafeteria. After Rami mentioned a supposed Hamas-veto in relation to the opening of a commercial and social activity, Saleh rapidly replied: "But this is not Hamas property, as well as Al-Aqsa Team is not Hamas".

While stressing on the role and supremacy of Hamas within this domain, Rami proudly replies: "But we are Hamas! I was Hamas once in Syria and I am Hamas here in Lebanon!" Khaled, whose family is whole affiliated with Hamas, replies: "Yes, you are part of Hamas, but the local Hamas. I cannot say I belong to anything else than the

resistance in Gaza" to underline the dialectical and operational distance between themselves seated "in exile" around that table, the armed militants and the decision-makers of the party at national level.[135]

Rather what should not be underestimated is the role of the local Hamas faction, that does not have anything to do with the bureaucracy of the party but rather with the thousands of people and families who are historically affiliated with the faction. This is right the case of Abou Khaled's family, who has been affiliated with Hamas since its foundation of the party and at the same time was the founder of the Al-Aqsa Team together with some other people who are currently affiliated with the party. In this sense, we should not forget how Al-Aqsa team was established in 1981, 6 years before Hamas' foundation in Gaza.

While we are going in depth with the entanglement between politics, belonging and local pride in the next paragraph, I guess that the debate may be further clarified by looking at the history of the club. In this sense, I have had several discussions on the issue with Ayman, who inherited Abou Khaled's responsibility of the club after the troubled years of the post- Civil war. Ayman, who is currently the director of a media association that gathers 25 Palestinian sport journalists[136], explains:

At the beginning, once there were still tents rather than organized camps, the practice of football was quite scares and they started naming the teams with symbols related to Palestine: like Al-Aqsa is related to Al-Aqsa Mosque in Palestine. Then they started to organize in a better way around the 1970s. During the Lebanese Civil War the Palestinian League was so influent that it was staged at the Medina ar-Riyadie in Beirut, the largest stadium in Lebanon. The best Lebanese players were also playing in the Palestinian league. people were afraid, Lebanese competitions stopped but at the same time the Palestinian organizations were rich at that time and could finance the players until the 1982 Israeli invasion.

There are many societies related with political parties, like the ones related to Fatah, Hamas, other organizations, associations and they get money from there. For example the teams related to Fatah directly receive funds and support by Mahmoud Abbas' Fatah party in Palestine. Al-Aqsa is supported by Hamas but what does it

[135] July 10, 2017: Informal talks held at the Hamas Football Field.
[136] *Palestinians' Sport Media Agency- Lebanon*. https://www.facebook.com/PSMAlb/

mean? I have trained Al-Aqsa for five years since 2001 to 2006, when I was living here in Beirut. When I started training Al-Aqsa it was basically two years the club was suspended, it was a stuck team without players. Once I and Hajj Abed came into the team, we managed to recruit players and started collecting players in order to restore the team: someone would give us 50$, others 100$ and we managed to fix the team. Before leaving Al-aqsa, around 2003-2005, it was – if not the best – one of the best three Palestinian teams in Lebanon.[137]

For decades social scientists have researched the overlap between sports - particularly football- and politics (Collins & Key, 2003; Giulianotti, 1997; Wagg, 1995). The previous description, in this sense, seems to depict how football offers a space for the formation, manifestation or 'spectacularisation' of various social, spatial, and political identities, especially oppositional ones (Armstrong and Giulianotti, 1997). In this sense, Lebanon does not constitute an exception, with a long and established relation between sports and politics whose complexity has been researched in very few studies. The available literature sheds light on how football in post-war Lebanon is considered a tool to renew and duplicate the dynamics of the political system, with most of the clubs identified with a specific sectarian identity (Reiche, 2011).

For instance, looking at the Hezbollah support towards al-Ahed Club, Lamloun (2011) shows how football clubs do not only constitute a main pillar in the activities of political parties, but also respond to the 'communitarian mobilization and socializations' function. This is supposed to be particular functioning within the strategy adopted by Islamist parties in the region, that is grounded on "an essentially positive view of leisure and recreation" expressed in the Qurʾan and hadith (Martin and Mason 2004, 5). In one of the rare researches on football clubs affiliated with Hamas, Jensen (2008) shows how in the case of the football team located in Gaza sport activities were designed as to prevent any setback to their existing efforts to create "sound Muslims".

Therefore, the success of creating sound Muslims required an institutional framework: the initiative was ideologically justified by the fact that Islam was an all-embracing system that naturally included sport as well (Jensen, 2008). In order to reach

[137] Ayman Awash (July 22, 2017). Personal interview, Beirut

that aim, it was a central part of their job in the club to ensure that young people's morals were improved and that they conducted themselves properly. Throughout my research in the Hamas Field and the affiliation with Al-Aqsa, this aspect of creating sound Muslims has appeared a decisive key since the very beginning.

Inside the football field, this imperative materialized in the choice of creating a smoke-free ambience within the all premises of the field. This constitutes a real exception in the camp, where any private or public space is full with people smoking their own water pipe all day and night long. "We keep on inviting children to come and play football as an alternative of staying all around the camp, smoking arghile and entering bad circles. How can we allow adults to smoke here?" says Khaled during one of our talks in the camp. While refusing the humanitarian logics behind football, this orientation recalls the Sport for development and Peace (SDP) strategy widely spread especially in regions affected by poverty, violence and conflict (Burnett, 2010; Giulianotti, 2011). Such as in any other context, sport is considered as a tool for encouraging a sense of community identity and thereby helping reduce antisocial behaviour (Hartmann & Depro, 2006).

According to several club managers interviewed all around Lebanon, social controls over participatory activities - such as sport- within the community contribute towards counterbalancing criminal activities. Moreover, in Hamas field the ban has indeed a pedagogic orientation entangled with a general disapproval for smoke as a bad habit for a sound Muslim. Along this attempt, indeed, we can frame the talks on morality given at regular intervals by one of the club's leaders especially to the young generations. In this regards, the responsible of the field and the football team set great store by the proper use of language: young people should speak nicely: to the leaders, to each other, to the referee, etc., it is taboo to use bad words.

In this sense, these conventions extend far beyond the safe space of the Hamas Field. During the first match of the Beirut's Palestinian Ramadan League, the coach had praised us by saying: "Behave well in the field, avoid any kind of problem. It is the Holy Month of Ramadan and we should show how we do behave in such a situation. Just play with serenity, move fast the ball and behave well"[138]. Even if in that occasion

[138] Coach Yemen (June 2017, 05). Pre-match discourse, Qasqas Football Field (Beirut).

the effective players' behaviour on the field did not result anyhow different from the other matches, all these recommendations seem to delineate the Al-Aqsa sound Muslim inside and outside the football field. In this sense, the social control of the management was aimed at maintaining a high moral code among the players. Beyond the preventive slogans mentioned before, this input on morality has materialized in several reprimands toward the players who showed bad behaviour during the trainings or the matches.

Moreover, a respectful conduct was not just demanded inside the football field: right during Ramadan tournaments, for instance, no one from Al-Aqsa players was supposed to break the fast during the day even during the matches. In this case, the issue of "siyam" (the fasting) clearly revealed particularly interesting to reveal my belonging with the team.

Despite most of my teammates were aware that I was not fasting during the day, they all invited me to join the Ramadan *Iftar* organized in the club office. Moreover, despite the management and the players were aware that some of them do not regularly practice the fasting, the moral conduct inside and outside the field implied not to show it publically. "Not all of us fast, but here you are not supposed to show it and drink inside the field or along the street. This is a general non-written norm in the camp. Moreover, people should understand that you are different from the other youth in the camp. You are from Al-Aqsa[139]" told me Khaled in the occasion of one of this dinners. This conduct was a way to detach and differentiate especially from the other football clubs in the camp. Around the camp, everyone - whether interested or not in football- knows Al-Aqsa team, which is distinguished for its high sportive and moral standards. In such a way, the construction of local pride around the football team works in opposition with the other clubs in Bourj el-Barajneh.

[139] Khaled (June 21, 2017). Informal talk, Bourj el-Barajneh club.

Figure 8: *The Ramadan League*, Qasqas Field. Beirut, 12/07/2017. Picture by the author.

4.7 Local pride and multiple affiliations

Such a moral "supremacy" was especially related to the historical rivalry against the other major team in the team: the Fatah-controlled Shabab al-ʿAwda Club whose office is just few meters far from the faction's main office in the camp. In this sense, by looking at the competitions and confrontation between these two teams I was able to shed a light on the subtle linkages between football clubs and political parties and how it entangles with the recent arrival of numerous players from Syria.

Fouad is probably the rising star of Al-Aqsa team: he is a fifteen year-old defender but stably plays in the major squad and has been researched by some professional Lebanese teams. During the last part of the 2017 season he appeared unenthusiastic of training and play in the team. Just after one of our trainings, His father Ali, a former al-Aqsa player who together with Khaled and Ehab is the responsible of the Hamas Football field, revealed:

I will never let my son Fouad going to play with other teams such as Shabab al-ʿAwda. I am sorry for that because I know he has some friends there since the school time, but that is not our way of living football. Look at them, they spend their own life in the streets with no good connections: most of them smoke and I do not what they do more than that. Moreover, if he goes to play with them he will not be allowed to spend time here in the football Field. What does it mean that you cannot stay here just because you

play for a team related to Fatah?[140]

Effectively, the *Nadi Shabab al-ʿAwda* Club (The Guys of the Return Club) is the only club in Bourj-el-Barajneh camp that does not train inside the Generations of the Return field: they do prefer renting out more expensive football fields outside the camp instead of somehow "recognize" the Hamas monopoly. As Sorek (2007) argues in his study about a Palestinian football team in Israeli leagues, football is an outstanding arena for practicing both separation and substitution spheres. Moreover, as stated by Ali, according to a non-written agreement between the board and the players, their players do not even frequent the football field in the camp.

All the generations are involved in this sort of "ban" on the relations with the other team. Mahmoud, for instance, is a 10-year old amazing left-foot striker who has been playing for the Generations of Return since he was a little child. He used to spend the whole day in the football field where he was considered a sort of living mascot. However, after that his parents agreed on transferring the son to the opponent team in March 2017, I have never seen him again inside the field that was his second home.

Even at major level, the most relevant episodes revolved around the transferring of some players from one team to the other. This is for instance what happened during the summer break in 2017, where four players from Al-Aqsa left the team in order to join the Shabab al-ʿAwda Club. Among them, surprisingly, there were the Turk family, one of the pillars of Al-Aqsa club since their father Abou Khaled had established the team in the early Seventies. During one private iftar held at their place the same day I was back from Italy, both Khaled and his brother Hussein tell me that they had left al-Aqsa few weeks ago. The former has recently joined al-Jalil club, another Palestinian team that competes for the Refugees' League in Beirut and usually trains in Hamas Field:

I have started training with them but I cannot play yet. Al-Jalil has just received a ban on new players because they are accused of having paid some athletes. And this is not allowed in our leagues even if some teams regularly do it such as the Sbebab al-Awde. People even think that Al-Aqsa players are paid, but you know very well how we even

[140] Ali (May 2017, 11). Talks at the Hamas field.

had to pay our jerseys and suits in order to play. I just left al-Aqsa because I did not feel confortable with the team and the management anymore. I could not stand the atmosphere we used to live during training, did you see how many people keep on fighting every time? There are people who do not come to trainings and then they regularly play matches on Sundays. Now with Jalil I really feel better: the level is not that proficient but at least I feel in peace with everybody. As regards Hussein, he also left al-Aqsa to join Shabab al-ʿAwda. Now he cannot play because his membership card is still with al-Aqsa, but he did a good choice. They are losing many players and most of them are going to Shabab al-ʿAwda: the atmosphere inside the club is really hard and now they are trying to recruit some of their players as a payback. I still work here inside the football field because the owners are not related with al-Aqsa, but most of the people here do not greet me anymore. Our father just told us to do whatever we prefer for our future. This is why Hussein did a right choice: there is no future in al-Aqsa. They are just interested in the prestige of the club and not on his players.[141]

Hussein explains more:

I was supposed to go playing for the Nejmeh Under 20 Team, one of the most important selections in Lebanon, but they did not allow me to train with them. Therefore I quitted the team and joined Shabab al-ʿAwda, which has several contacts all over the country with the Lebanese Teams and has already given some players away. At the same time, even if they do not pay me for playing with them, I can start working with the Palestinian militias of the camp. They give you 350.000 LBP at the beginning and 500.000 once you graduate. It is not that much, but better than staying on the sofa as I did during the last two years. Moreover, Fatah pays you the Daman, a general insurance that pay 90% of your medical expenses. This is very important! If you are Palestinian in Lebanon in need for a medical surgery, you even die before collecting the money."[142]

Last but not least Abou Khaled, who joined our table at the end of the *Iftar*, concludes: "They should take care of their future. They did a good choice to leave al-Aqsa: this is

[141] Khaled (June 2017, 22). Talks during dinner: Bourj el-Barajneh camp.
[142] Hussein (June 2017, 22). Talks during dinner: Bourj el-Barajneh camp

not the same team as before". Inquired on Hussein's choice to join the rival team that is historically linked to Fatah, he replies: "It does not mean anything; they are currently better than us as regards football opportunities. We are talking about football, not politics. Al-Aqsa is not Hamas: when I established the club in 1981, Hamas was not even in our minds. Football came first"[143].

The sport and human biographies just mentioned show how the entanglement between football and politics even in a very politicized environment is more complicated than a general dependency on the factional system. Such as in Jensen's conclusions (2013) about *Jam'iyya club* in Gaza, it is clear that a number of non-religious, ideological and political factors contributed to the players' choice, and several of the players in fact had a "consumer" relationship to the clubs. Though sport can be used as a lens through which to examine broader social processes and structures, it does not necessarily follow that any sport is a mere reflection of the broader socio-political context in which it is played. In this sense, Khaled and Hussein switched clubs partly in order to satisfy their own sport ambitions and partly to benefit same range of material benefits provided by another club. Even if it meant leaving their historical club in order to join the archrivals affiliated with the most meaningful opponent political faction.

Such a discourse is not just limited to the local rivalry between al-Aqsa and Shabab al-ʿAwda in Bourj el-Barajneh. As previously mentioned by Ayman, most of the Palestinian teams are in some extent related to Palestinian parties or other associations. Among the wide spectrum of the Palestinian football in Lebanon, Shabab Filistin in Beirut is probably the only one that is unanimously recognized as a strongly opponent of such a factional system. Majdi, who is the President and ideator of such a club reveals:

We do not have any relationship with political parties, and this is the first element that let us being successful. Because if you belong to another, then another again will be against you and the other says: "ah you belong to Fatah, you belong to Hamas". Our strength depends on us being independent. Our decision and our works are independent

[143] Abou Khaled (June 2017, 22). Talks during dinner: Bourj el-Barajneh camp

and we do not have any relations directly with the parties. Our key for success is Istiqlal (Indipendence). The other clubs belong to either associations or party because they look for support. But they are lying to the people, to God, to you and to Palestine. If you want to liberate Palestine, Palestine is there (indicating the south direction from the terrace). *Why are you holding machines here?*
However, there is reputation not just at politics but at football too. If you feel like good player you look for good clubs. If you find you do not have the chance to play with Aqsa, you go to Akka. But if you are with Fatah, you cannot play with Aqsa because the party tells you "why you go with Hamas. Come and play with us at Shabab al Awda. But It is not all political like this. Football is important too! Look at my son for example. He came to me and saying: " I do not want to play with Shabab filistin anymore." What shall I do? Shall I beat him? I told him: " you want to go and play with Aqsa? Go and play with them". There is nothing political like this, but once you are there people start to say "ah you play with Aqsa, so you are with Hamas". There are people who look at this point, but there are also players who are not interested in this issue. They just want to play football. A lot of players really do not care. Sometimes Al Aqsa is considered like good. And if you are a good player you look for a good club.[144]

Football teams and tournaments offer a liminal social arena that questions most of specific literature and even the popular belief in the country, which presents clubs as internally unified communities with well-defined political if not sectarian identities (Al-Masri, 2016). In this sense, throughout my fieldwork I observed how the complexity of the entanglement of sports and politics and the negotiations over how they are defined show broader networks beyond the conventional national, political and religious allegiances.

Play initiates both to negotiation and conflict, thus making the dynamics of the playing incredibly valuable, as they reveal the way in which the players (the community individuals or groups) relate to one another, their hierarchies, power struggles and frustrations or preferences (Charif & Hafeda, 2017). In this regards, many examples

[144] Majdi (September 2017, 30). Personal interview, Shatila camp.

revealed how the players' motivation for choosing a team shed a light on how broader networks are negotiated in Lebanon. While the majority of the Palestinian teams are affiliated with the local Palestinian factions and reclaim their attachment with homeland within their denomination, all of them present inside their rooster an important number of players recently came from Syria. I have focused on how the "foreign element" - namely the Syrian players who are supposed to be mostly out of the intra-factional dynamics of competition and control- shape their presence inside a Palestinian team and how such a relationship extends to the other dimensions of their daily life.

Figure 9: *Clashes on the field during a match between Al-Aqsa and Shabab al-ʿAwda.* 30/03/2017. Sahel football field, Beirut. Picture by the author.

4.8 Ibn al fareeq-Ibn al mukhayyam

Eight out of 20 Al-Aqsa players were not Palestinian refugees born and raised in Lebanon: three Palestinians from Syria, three Syrians, one Lebanese and one Italian compose the current "foreign element" of the team. Looking at why and to which extent Syrian, Lebanese and even Palestinians from Syria decide to play for al-Aqsa reveals new meanings related to the foreigners' positionality both in the club and in the camp. To which extent do players who were not sons of the camp (Ibna al-Mukhayyam)

choose to play for well-established and politically charged club such as Al-Aqsa Team? In this regards, we should introduce the two definitions you are likely to hear inside the football field: *Ibn al fareeq* (the son of the team) and *Ibn al mukhayyam* (the son of the camp).

Concerning the previous question, Louay delineates personal trajectory behind the choice to join al-Aqsa:

After I had accomplished the military service in Syria, problems started: there was not a good atmosphere other there. Then I decided to leave it and came to Lebanon. Here there was nothing related to football because I did not go to live in the camp. I have started a new job, a new life where football was moved to the background. Just after meeting Rami back in the camp and other guys here I started back to football and came to know new people. People here in the football field started to notice my skills: Al-Aqsa coach was the first one to see me while I was playing with an informal team made up of Syrian players. Therefore, after playing for few months in another Palestinian team I joined al-Aqsa more than two years ago and currently was granted with the number 10. Thanks God I have arrived at al-Aqsa: when the coach gave me the number 10 it was not a matter of chance: the captain came close to me and officially recognized me as the number 10. You know what means in football. However, regarding titles or cups, we have not gained anything yet: our best was going to play in another mohafaza (region) for national Palestinian competitions. This is the best you can do as far as today: it means that you are good player, but if you take into consideration the broader perspective, you have just gone to play out of the mohafaza (district). *But still, Al-Aqsa is among the best teams where you can play football if you are Palestinian.*[145]

Indeed, the sport-related motives deeply intertwine with more personal reasons, such as in case of the historical friendship that linked Louay with Rami, one of Al-Aqsa team managers:

[145] Louay (April, 22). Personal interview: Bourj el-Barajneh camp

Back in Syria, Louay used to play with us in the Yarmouk's Jenin Club: he and his brother were among the most skilled players in the team. When I came here in Lebanon and came to know that he was here in Beirut, we have met and starting playing football together in Shatila camp. My family and I used to live there for a while, so we began playing for Riha club in Shatila. After some time people from al-Aqsa saw him playing and proposed us joining the club: Louay became the number 10 of the Team and I, after that I moved to Bourj el-Barajneh, became part of the al-Aqsa board.

Since his arrival in Lebanon, Louay has settled down in Corniche al-Mazra, a residential area in central Beirut not very far from the camp. Therefore, he is not perceived as a "son of the camp" since he just joins Bourj el-Barajneh for playing football and spending time with friends. However, especially since his promotion to the number 10, teammates and fans recognize him as an integral part of the team's tissue: an "ibn al-fareeq". As mentioned in the previous chapter, such a belonging to the team constitutes an unusual social capital that turned out to become an effective resource during his detentions between Istanbul and Beirut in order to avoid his refoulement to Syria.

In this regards, beyond Rami and the president Abed, Abou Tareq completes Al-Aqsa board. He is a very placid Syrian man on his fifties raised in Ghouta and moved to Beirut in 2012. After settling down in Bourj el-Barajneh in the early 2013 with his family, he created a non-professional football team with Syrian and Palestinian-Syrian. "I called it Wahde as our favourite team back in Syria. We gathered the most talented Syria's players from Beirut and Bourj el-Barajneh. Louay and Yazan used to play with us before being recruited by Al-Aqsa[146]." Abou Tareq is unanimously recognized by the players as the most rational and wise persons inside the Board: he usually works in order to restore a peaceful atmosphere inside the team in case of frequent interpersonal disputes among the players. Especially, he works as a sort of gatekeeper between the historical "core" of the team, made up of Palestinian players who have been played for al-Aqsa since they were children, and the newcomers from Syria.

[146] Abou Tareq (June 2017, 22). Personal interview: Bourj el-Barajneh camp

Zaher, for instance, is a tenacious Syrian middle fielder who has just recently joined al-Aqsa: he currently works and sleeps inside a milk factory located inside Bourj el-Barajneh. However, despite dwelling in the camp for some time, before joining the club his connections were merely linked to his national friends and parents known since Hama's times. Al-Aqsa managers rapidly noticed his football skills during one of the informal matches played in Hamas Field where Zaher used to play with some friends. Once more, it was Abou Tareq who has managed to create the *liason* and transformed him as a pillar of Al-Aqsa middle field.

However, during the first months of presence in the team he visibly shows a sort of detachment in respect with the group dynamics both inside and outside the field. This was especially due to a sort of bullying behaviour imposed on him by some of the historical players of the team, who do not miss the opportunity to mock him for his Syrian accent and show an aggressive attitude towards him. Once trainings or matches are over, Zaher immediately leaves the football field: in some cases, he was noticed joining some his Syrian friends to play matches around Beirut even on the eve of al-Aqsa's matches. This is why during on these occasions he was summoned to join a restricted meeting inside the club's office to verify his rate of satisfaction inside the club.

Unsurprisingly, it was Abou Tareq the one among the board designated to lead the discussion towards a cooperative resolution of such misunderstandings. In front of some of the teammates he tell Zaher: "If you want to emerge and become a real football player you should put your head here inside the club. It is really not positive for you to go and play football even the night before our matches. What is your problem with the team? Why do not you feel comfortable? We are really sorry that and we would like to solve it. Do not take care of Ghassan's jokes[147]: these are not important stuff. We all know that he is really *bala zop* (without taste). But if you have some other kinds of problems, please let us know[148]". In this sense, Abou Tareq's double belonging contributes to the credibility of his own words. While being perceived by all the players as a moral authority inside the team, his Syrian background contributes to create the affiliation between the new players and the club.

[147] The Palestinian guy mentioned in the last paragraphs who openede up a cafè in Dahiye.
[148] Abou Tareq (July 11, 2017). Extract from his discourse during a team meeting.

It is precisely through personal, national and sport multiple belonging that About Tareq contributes to shape the sense of belonging to the team. "Enta 'ibn al Fareeq" (You are a son of the club) says the president Abed in order to emphasize the club's commitment. In this sense, the time spent within the team both inside and outside the field works as a valid ally in order to foster an *'ibn al fareeq*. In Zaher's case, the affiliation to the club got deeper and deeper, until he is currently one of the pillars of the squad and spends a lot of his free time inside the Hamas Field with the current teammates. Moreover, his acquired commitment to the club spills over far beyond the perimeter of the football field: Zaher has recently found a new occupation outside the camp through the intermediation of some of his teammates.

The acquisition of "social capital" (Bourdieu, 1972) is very relevant in understanding why and how these footballers found it rewarding to join the club. In this sense, the trajectories and negotiations behind Zaher's new job opportunity in this case is noticeably relevant but not an isolated one. In the former pages we have already outlined Yazan's and Louay's entanglements with the club. Specifically, the first one benefited from some relations emerged inside the field in order to acquire a new document and recreate his own-new "more convenient Palestinian-Lebanese identity. From the other side, at the beginning of the chapter we have deeply analysed the multiple mobilisations of Louay's teammates and friends during his detention between Istanbul and Beirut.

The dynamics evolving around Al-Aqsa football team have shed a further light on the transcending potential endowed with these networks. Effectively, about half of the team's players also work together in a plumber factory managed by Saleh, the current Al Aqsa coach in office for two years. While four members of the team had already been working in Rami's factory since long time, other four have recently found employment right after meeting the owner on the training field. Tareq, a Syrian young man from Damascus who currently lives in the camp and plays for Al Aqsa, explains:

Once I arrived from Damascus in 2013, I knew just few Syrians living in the camp. After moving to an apartment close to the football field, this ambience has become my second home: I am definitely a football addicted! I started playing with the nash'iin (Young club) while my father was appointed as vice-coach of Al-Aqsa. While he still runs his

small activity of maintenance of the buildings in the camp, I found a job in Rami's factory in Dahieh: he picks me up any morning at 7.30 in the morning and I come back to the camp with Abed in the afternoon. Moreover, even if my we have never renewed our papers, once I started working with Rami I do not have any problems while moving inside and outside the camp. "I feel at home here: I could not imagine a Palestinian camp could become my home. Before starting playing football I was no one in the camp. But just after becoming a 'son of the team', I now feel a 'son of the camp'." [149]

[149] Yousef (March 2017, 21). Personal interview. Bourj el-Barajneh camp

Summary

The daily trips from Bourj el Barajneh to the training stadium with my Al-Aqsa teammates were particularly relevant for investigating practices of spatial appropriation in the context of permanent strong securitization policies around al-Dahiye. By recreating a feeling of translocal familiar belonging, outdoor activities introduce unpredictability and consequently new possibilities of reshaping daily life trajectories. In this sense, the football fields around Beirut southern suburbs turn into arenas where social space has the potential to be dynamically reinterpreted and to reconfigure the urban geographies of the camp far beyond the leisure time.

Through the redefinition of spaces according to their own perceptions and daily mobility patterns, refugees from Syria in the camp recreate a whole translocal area blurring the physical boundaries while moving away from the pervading and ontological "ethos of insecurity".

Combining an historical presence inside the camp with the contested affiliation with Hamas, an ethnographic picture of Al-Aqsa Team reveals unexpected daily "alliance of bodies" shared by its players. Through multiple personal, national and sport feelings of belonging exemplified throughout the chapter, the affiliation with a well-established and "respectable" football team contributes to foster the newcomers' individual presence inside the camp and extends to other social dimension such as the chance to benefit from new employment opportunities.

By discussing how the nexus between being a "son of the camp" and a "son of the team" is reformulated by the recent arrival of new members from Syria, the chapter shows to which extent distinct spatio-temporalities of exile in Bourj el-Barajneh camp can renegotiate feelings of local belonging. A football field inside a refugee camp materializes as a place where people recreate a feeling of familiarity, questioning the binary distinction between a "home" and a "refugee camp".

Relevant literature

Abourahme, N. (2014). “Assembling and Spilling-over: Towards an 'Ethnography of Cement'. *International Journal of Urban and Regional Research* 39(2): 200–217.

Appadurai, A. (1996). *Modernity at Large: Cultural Dimensions of Globalization*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press.

Bourdieu, P. (1978). “Sport and Social Class”. *Social Science Information* 17: 819-840.

Deeb, L. and Harb, M. (2013). Leisurely Islam. Negotiating Geography and Morality in Shi’ite South Beirut. Princetown University Press.

Giulianotti, R. (2011). “The sport, development and peace sector: a model of four social policy domains”. *Journal of Social Policy* 40 (4): 757-776.

Gorokhoff, P. (1984). “Création et évolution d’un camp palestinien de la ban- lieue sud de Beyrouth Bourj el-Barajneh”. In *Politiques urbaines dans le Monde Arabe*, edited by F. Metral, 313-329. Lyon: Maison del L’Orient méditerranéen.

Habib, E. (2012). “Bourj Barajneh: Reinterpretation of a Palestine Refugee Camp in Beirut Morphology, Internal Dynamics and Articulations to its Immediate Environment”. Master thesis, Politecnico di Milano- Faculty of Archtecture and Society, Academic Year 2011-2012.

Harb, M. (2003). “Al-Dahiye de Beyrouth: parcours d’une stigmatisation urbaine, consolidation d’un territoire politique”. *Genèses 51*: 70-91.

Hatem, J. (eds.) (2016). “Planning the City through Play: Youth Efforts in Making Communal Football Fields in Beirut”. Beirut: Public Works Studio.

Jensen, M.I. (2009). *The Political Ideology of Hamas: A Grassroots Perspective*. London: I.B. Tauris.

Lefebvre, H. (1996). "The right to the city". In *Writings on cities*, edited by E. Kofman and E. Lebas, 147-159. Cambridge: Wiley-Blackwell.

Pinelli, B. (2017). “Border, Politics and Subjects. Introductory notes on refugee research in Europe”. Ethnography and Qualitative Research 1: 5-24.

Urry, J. (2007). *Mobilities*. Cambridge: Polity Press.

5. Rethinking Lebanon's Football Society

Introduction

Despite its popularity and everyday quality, "many still regard football in the Arab World as merely a domain of amusement to attract functional for scopes that extend beyond the football pitch" (Amara, 2014: 8). While most research has conceived Lebanese football as another aprioristic tool to reaffirm the pervasive extension of sectarianism over any social national arena, this chapter investigates the "everyday dimensions of football" (Turnbull et al., 2008) through reconnecting the daily life of numerous refugee players, supporters and managers involved in Lebanon's football world. After that in the previous chapter I hinged my ethnography on Al-Aqsa team in order to investigate the social-spatial reconfiguration, next pages contextualize this work in a socio-historical perspective focused on the football society in Lebanon, that contribute to exemplify many dynamics of exclusion/inclusion and reinvention in the society.

Despite the lack of written sources and the disappearance of many former protagonists, I move my analysis from an historical recollection of Palestinian football set along a zoom-out process from the refugee camps in order to delineate how Palestinian refugees in Lebanon have established their own sport system through the foundation of numerous sport clubs and competitions all over Lebanon.

As a result of the current conflict, the Palestinian football society was not spared from the arrival of thousands of Syria's amateur and elite football players from Syria. Retracing the historical role played by sport in enhancing national minorities' presence and observing how this "parallel" refugees' system entangles with the official Lebanese sport institutions, this part of the research analyses to which extent the "everyday dimension of football" has constituted an alternative resource in the face of the progressive narrowing of the refugees' socio-spatial visibility in the country.

Figure 190: *Spectators enter the Beirut Sports City for joining the match between Lebanon and Palestinian national teams*. On the background, Shatila refugee camp. 10/11/2016, Beirut. Picture by the author.

5.1 "Our guys from Shatila play better than them"

10th November 2016: Sports City Stadium, Beirut.

I had been waiting for that match for weeks.
It was a friendly match but still, to me it was THE match: Lebanon versus Palestine.
The day when the two federations publically announced the match, I was dreaming about a fully booked stadium divided into two distinct supporters' zone. From one side, it would have been the chance for the Lebanese fans to appreciate the technical progress of their national team, which was warming up on the eve of the Asian Cup official qualifications. From the other, the Palestinian refugees in Lebanon would have had the chance to finally watch and support their national team even from their protracted exile.

However, even few days before the match there was no enthusiasm among my teammates. Most of them were not aware or of the match in Beirut. Some were evidently not interested in joining the Sportive City for the match. Abed looks like surprised about my enthusiasm for the match: "Are you serious? Lebanon-Palestine? Is this a football match? Champions' League is football: these are two mediocre teams! I will stay at home at watch it on TV if they show it". However, two of my teammates decide to join the match after their workday in Beirut.

We gather together in front of the Sportive City just few minutes before the start of the match. Once I arrive at the parking spots of the stadium, just very few people end up cross the bridge over Airport Road in order to get the Sportive City. The hundred meters that separate the gate of the Sportive City with the stadium are as always supervised by military platoons. Beyond the original scope of the facility, in fact, the stadium is partially reconverted into a military base for the Lebanese Army. This is witnessed by the tens of tanks that enrol the "curved" sector of the stadium that connects the Airport road with the opposite side. Right on the other side the Stadium is "enrolled" by the extreme ramifications of the Palestinian camp of Shatila.

From the upper stands of the Stadium you have a whole panoramic view of the camp. If you just walk inside the camp during the day, you would be able to see the stadium's light poles as it mainly located on a higher level than the camp. This is why the Sportive City, rebuilt after the 1982-Israeli destruction by the former PM Rafic Hariri in the preparation for the 2000 Asian Cup, is a strategically relevant location within the city beyond the sportive function of the facility.

Unsurprisingly, the fence that curtails the side of the Sportive City opposite to Shatila is heavily fortified and there are no open gates in order to access the perimeter of the Stadium. Despite the ordinary logistic obstacles, just few minutes before the match hundreds of people were walking from the camp towards the main gate of the Stadium. In this case, Palestinian fans who have mostly come from the camp have to enrol the whole fenced-stadium in order to cross the main gate on the Airport Road, get the ticket office and then walk in the opposite direction in order to enter the dedicate sector just

in front of Shatila. "We move from our home, walk for one kilometre in order to be back home" ironically says Mahmoud, one of the Palestinian guys we usually meet around Beirut's stadiums both as spectators and as players in the Refugees' Leagues.

Once we finally enter the stadium from the "Palestinian" sector few minutes before the kick-off, the scene from the other side of the pitch is really demoralizing. We cannot count more than two hundred Lebanese spectators in the other sectors out of a stadium with the capacity of around 50.000 people. On the contrary, "our" sector at the end will count more than 5.000 people with numerous Palestinian flags to colour the standings. Borrowing from a slogan chanted inside stadiums all over the world, we would say: "it feels like playing at home". But Palestinians are supposed to be the host side, inside the stadium as well as inside the country.

Anyway, the match seems to have an appeal solely for the Palestinian supporters. After the first qualification for the 2015- Asian Football Cup in Australia, the Palestinian national team has been raising its popularity far beyond the occupied homeland. The symbolic value of this match in front of thousands of Palestinian refugees is well recognized both by the team and by the supporters. A banner shown by some young men in the standing says: "We have not only come to watch football, we have come to get a fresh breath from you, to help us tolerate our absence from Palestine".

Figure 11: *The mentioned banner* (Source: "Palestinian Sport in Lebanon" Facebook page)

The nationalist claim gets its climax with the national Palestinian anthem strongly sung by the players in company with thousands of voices from the standings. Along the same direction, the players greet their Lebanese opponents by donating and making them wearing around the neck the Palestinian-style scarves with the logo of the country. After such a friendly warm-up, I would have expected a very match played in a very "friendly" atmosphere, without too much competition on the field.
As it often happened throughout my fieldwork in Lebanon, the unfolding of the game has deeply overturned my simplistic beliefs created out of the field. Indeed, both the squads decide to interpret the game in a very aggressive manner, with numerous contrasts and tackle during the first half of the game. More than the opponent, the Lebanese selection interprets better the match in terms of attitude and ball possession until they score the first goal before the end of the first half.

My friends and most of the supporters look like disappointed at the end of the first half: the Palestinian squad had not even made a single shoot versus the opponents' goalkeeper. The initial enthusiasm due to the atmosphere and the value of the match is rapidly replaced by negative comments about the proficiency of the team. Referring to the Palestinian players on the field, a guy just close to us ironically comments: "They cannot play football, indeed! Why do they recruit players from the whole world to have these scarce results? Our guys from Shatila play better than these ones. I swear you!" Just after 45 minutes of scarce football, the players who at the beginning of the match were proudly acclaimed as national representatives turn into "foreign" persons who dishonour in this way the Palestinian pride on the pitch.

In a sense, the "local" Palestinian players from the Lebanese camps are mentioned as terms of confrontation with the players on the pitch. In common, the national members and the camps' players share that they are mostly "sons of the exile". The latters were born and raised inside the Palestinian camps, the former raised either in Europe or beyond. Jaka Ihbeisheh, for instance, was born in Ljubljana from a Palestinian father and Slovenian mother and raised in Slovenia, where he improved his skills in the minor national leagues. He barely speaks few words of Arabic and communicates with his

teammates in English, which is mostly the second official language of the team. On the contrary, Abdelatif Bahdari -the captain of the National team- is a Palestinian vigorous defender who was born in Gaza and moved to play in the West Bank before finding teams in Jordan, Saudi Arabia and Egypt, where he currently plays with the Al-Jaish team.

Unsurprisingly, such players' sport careers are considered as "privileged" by the Palestinian supporters who have gathered at the stadium, who would expect a higher quality of playing in line with the professional career outside Palestine. This is why the expression "Our guys from Shatila play better than them" lays claim to a local pride grounded on decades of football played in precarious fields inside refuge camps that are diametrically far from the international scenarios of the current game.

"Thanks God I did not listen to my heart by thought about the wallet" says a man close to me while showing a betting ticket in favour of Lebanon that he had done in Shatila before joining the stadium. After the reprimands of some friends (related both to the "betrayal" of Palestine and to the "haram" practice of betting), the man seems to justify himself: "They (the players) on the pitch do not care about the results, why should I do?" Such a general atmosphere of scepticism about the supported team pervades the standing even during the second half, where the level of game does not appear to improve anyhow. Rather, in several occasion Lebanon goes close to score the second goal. Some of the supporters abandon the stadium even some minutes before the final whistle.

However, once more, it is the trajectory of a ball that overturns the situation on the 92th minute, just few instants before the end of the match. After an apparent innocuous contrast between a Palestinian middle fielder and the Lebanese left-wing defender, the Jordanian referee Murad Al Zawahreh whistle a very dubious penalty in favour of Palestine. On the stands we all look like incredulous for few seconds before letting loose with the celebrations. On the pitch, the Lebanese players cannot stand such a decision and keep on furiously protesting with the referee and his assistants for several minutes. Some sporadic fights among the players emerge throughout the pitch and even

in the bench sector. Finally, just on the 98th minute, the Palestinian captain Bahdari scores the penalty and draws the match.

All the players celebrate the goal in front of the Palestinian sector: the captain seems like pointing to the supporters in order to dedicate the goal to their patience. After the final whistle, it is just a matter of crazy jubilant celebrations that last for more than twenty minutes. We can hear no more critique against the quality of the players despite 100 minutes of low-level football indeed. However, this element does not count after a tie scored at the very last minute. Such as at the beginning of the match, all the players are acclaimed as "abtal al-watan" (national heroes) for the unexpected draw.

*The players return to embody the nationalist attachment to the stolen homeland. This is why the most recurrent chorus of celebration to honour the players was: "*Bi 'l-ruh, bi 'l-dam, nafdiki yā Filistin" ("With Spirit and Blood We Will Redeem Palestine"). The *same slogan you can hear in occasion of the celebration for Palestinian national recurrences or in occasion of specific events throughout the year. We all go back home very satisfied and in line with the expectations we had come to the stadium. However, I keep on wondering how it would be without a fake penalty whistled by an unaware Jordanian referee.*

Figure 12: The *celebrations at the end of the game.*
Beirut Sport City, 10/11/2017. Picture by the author

5.2 Imagining a Nation, challenging the State

The final scene of jubilant supporters who celebrate their national heroes after a match could take place in many other contexts and sports played around the globe. "Football and social movements provide ample opportunities to individuals to interact and build a collective effervescence" (Cleland et al, 2018: 34). In the case of the Beirut-football match described before, the peculiarity is due to the specific historical, political and social processes connected with the game. A full-packed sector of refugee persons who mainly move out from their refugee camps in order to support the national team of a country where most of them have never been. Moreover, the opponent team is represented by the national representatives of the State where these refugees have been living through troubled decades of exile.

The location of such a game and the multiple interconnections between the national teams involved contribute to favour the dialectic between team spirit and national sentiment, which is inherent in the sport as recalled by Appadurai's work (1995) on the decolonization of Indian cricket. MacClancy (1996) underlines to which extent sports are vehicles of identity, providing people with a sense of difference and a way of classifying themselves, whether latitudinally or hierarchically. Such as in the case of the match set in Beirut's stadium, the identification with the exposition of hundred national flags and the performance of nationalist chants materialize a quasi-national experience by people who have been deprived of the right to experience a geographical identification with Palestine. Among the others, the sports contribution to the issue of nationalism is best summed up with the historian Hosbawn's statement: "The imagined community of millions seems more real as a team of eleven named players. The individual, even the one who only cheers, becomes a symbol of his nation himself" (1992: 143).

The development of Middle Eastern sport intersects with important cultural and historical processes such as colonialism, the rise of nationalism, women's liberation, urbanism, industrialization, state building, globalization and political revolt (Raab, 2012). Given its strength in producing various forms of distinction and protest, "sports

frequently helped post-colonial Middle Eastern and North African societies mould multiple, often rival identities into one that encompassed the nation as a whole" (Dorsey, 2016: 38). Focusing on the long-troubled history of Lebanese football, Mouawad (2018) reflects on how sports enable people to imagine a defiant nation amid the so-called breakdown or disintegration of the state, on the one hand, and flailing national identification and belonging, on the other hand.

Sports in general and football in particular served historically as a platform of opposition and resistance against colonial rulers and their local allies, and as a tool to display a nation struggling for independence on the international stage. Indeed, this has been the case of the Palestinian National Team after qualifying for the first time at the 2015 Asian Cup International in Australia. "Simply by playing, the Palestinian identity is furthered because it exists and it is discussed in the local newspapers and by people in the society" (Raab and Khalid, 2016: 42). Questioned about the popular enthusiasm towards the national team, the Palestinian player Nadim Barghouti replied: "It is a perfect way to prove to the rest of the world we are human beings. We are not terrorists. In the past all the world thought Palestinians threw stones. I consider the players to be soldiers without weapons. We are playing for freedom in Palestine."[150]

The football pitch is often a reflection of the society and an indicator of things to come in the Middle East and North Africa, where the sport has consistently played an important political and social role for more than a century. Even at a broader level, football can serve the state-national elites, but it can also encourage and empower local belonging as opposed to the dominant national identities (Raab & Khalidi, 2016). While being ignored by most of the research in the Middle East studies, relevant works on the nexus between sports, politics and society in the region have recently been published in the aftermath of the so-called "Arab Revolts.

Sport was incorporated, and still, in the political affairs of countries in the Arab World either to strengthen the legitimacy of ruling parties and royal families, or

[150] The interview is retrieved from James Montague's football travelogue (2008) on the Middle East: "*When Friday Comes Football in the War Zone"*. Edinburgh: Mainstream Publishing Company.

nowadays to delegitimise the ousted regimes following "the Arab spring" (Amara, 2014). This was especially the case of militant football fans as drivers of resistance to the regime in Egypt of Hosni Mubarak as well as their role in student protests against the military-backed government of general Abdel Fattah Al-Sisi. The epitome was reached on 1st February 2012, when 74 people died and hundreds were injured after clashes broke out at a football match in Port Said between Cairo club Al-Ahly and local club Al-Masry. Together with their archrival Zamalek, the Ultras of Cairo-based al-Ahly played a prominent role in the 18-day uprising that spelled the end of Mubarak's rule[151].

Rommel's work (2014) on Egyptian football elucidates how public debates about a popular sport under particular historical-political circumstances can encapsulate the nation, and transmute into a political struggle over how the national should be lived and felt, as well as how it should relate to the outside world. Egyptian ultras in this sense fit within Bayat's category of urban subjects (2010), who express their discontent through reshaping the social destination of a football stadium. "Conflict originates from the active use of public space by subjects who, in the modern states, are allowed to use it only passively – through walking driving, watching – or in other ways that the state dictates" (Bayat, 2013: 12).

The Egyptian ultras' claim to ownership of the stadium directly challenged the state's self- defined prerogative and officials' perception of their authority to which the regime instinctively responded with repression. Spectators were banned from attending domestic football matches since Port Said stadium disaster and were banned again in February 2015 when 20 Zamalek fans were killed after police forces used teargas to disperse a crowd of fans attempting to enter Cairo's Air Defence Stadium. The control of stadiums has been crucial for the rulers since football acquired a global popularity: "any active or participative use infuriates officials, who see themselves as the sole authority to establish and control public order" (Bayat, 2013: 12).

[151] Following live television footage which showed images of security forces standing idly by as fans of Port Said's local team, al-Masry, stormed the pitch to chase al-Ahly players, angry fans congregated outside al-Ahly's ground to protest against the ministry of the interior and the ruling Supreme Council of the Armed Forces (Scaf) for what they felt was a major lapse of security at the stadium.

The Beirut football match narrated above deeply engages with such a discussion by materializing inside a football stadium the entanglement between the manifestations of nationalism and the strategic reinvention of public spaces. The relationship emerged at the end of the Beirut match between the Palestinian national team and its refugee supporters deeply evokes what Billig (1995) defines as and everyday sense of "banal nationalism", which marks a significant shift towards the ongoing analysis of contemporary expressions of nationhood at the quotidian level around unexpected settings. We would never expect such a huge manifestation of Palestinian national pride in the country outside the refugee camps, if not during annual recurrences (such as the Nakba Day) or in occasion of extraordinary episodes of violence and brutality carried out by the Israeli Forces in Palestine.

The Beirut Sports City has historically offered a platform for addressing political claims far beyond the football pitch, mostly materialized in a long history of violence and clashes among football supporters (Mouawad, 2018). Indeed, when it comes to the match between Palestine and Lebanon national teams played in Beirut Sports City, the refugees' manifestation of "banal nationalism" inside a football field evokes the socio-spatial relegation of Palestinian refugee camps in Lebanon and questions the concept of "hierarchical spatialities". During that night as well as throughout my fieldwork, Beirut has become a "privileged" location where issues of space and mobility play with the reshaping of individual and collective identities inside the perimeter of a football field.

5.3 Football and politics in Lebanon

Since the establishment of the Lebanon Football Association (LFA) in 1933, national championships were repeatedly suspended, cancelled, or played without spectators. Over 77 years until 2010, the annual LFA's championship was cancelled 27 times due to political and security considerations (Mouawad, 2018). In 2007, following a period of intensification of fights held at each match, the Lebanese Football Association barred all spectators from matches under pressure from the government. The ban was released just 5 years later, with a significant loss in terms of attractiveness for the fans, whose attendances at the stadium is significantly far from the previous standard.

In this sense, the totally absence of Lebanese supporters for the match of the national team against Palestine described at the beginning of the chapter is pretty significant. Most of the people who do not usually attend stadium declare not to be interested in local football. Noha, a young Lebanese football fan with whom I used to watch international football matches on TV, explained me her disaffection for Lebanese football: "Real Madrid is football, Lebanese football is not a real matter of sport. They put politics even there"[152]. On the same way, local and international commentators often degrade football in Lebanon as just an extension of Lebanon's fractured political life, and consequently, as an extension of sectarianism (Mouawad, 2018). Borrowing George Orwell's expression, Reiche (2016), describes the current state of Lebanese football as a "war minus the shooting". Along this scenario, then, the 2007-ban from attending games was directly linked to the expectation for Lebanese fans to clash according to sectarian criteria more far beyond the sportive motivations.

The most emblematic case of the multiple entanglements between sport and national politics is unavoidably represented by al-Ahed Club, which is regularly financed and supported by Hezbollah and some Shia businessmen related to the Party of God. On the same way we did with Al-Aqsa team in the previous chapter, we also need to dissociate from the belief that Al-Ahed club is a son of Hezbollah, even just for the fact that the football club (1966) was created sixteen years before the political party (1982). Currently, Al-Ahed Club is regarded as a crucial element in the 'normalization' process of the party, reflecting its will to integrate the Lebanese scene as any other party. Thanks to significant investments both from inside and from the Lebanese Diaspora in Central Africa, Al-Ahed has recently won its sixth Lebanese title after a long-standing confrontation with Nejmeh Team.

[152] Noha (February 2017, 5). Personal interview, Beirut.

Figure 13: *Ahed Celebrations at the end of the League.*
Beirut Sport City, 15/04/2018. Picture by the author.

Unsurprisingly, the conclusive match of the 2017/2018 season between the two clubs has been played at closed door after al-Ahed Club supporters had celebrated the title with an unauthorized pitch invasion during the previous match. Rather, several rumours inside the Lebanese clubs reveal how this choice was due to the fear for clashes between the two supporters: the rivalry between the two clubs and its entanglements with local and international politics constitutes a main track throughout my research. In particular, I wanted to include within my research the sport and human biography of Qassem Shamkha, a 19-year old talented player grown in Bourj el-Barajneh, who left the club in order to fight in Syria with Hezbollah and was killed in Aleppo in November 2016[153].

Asked about Shamkha's sport and symbolic value for the team during one of our in-depth interviews, Al-Ahed president attests:

[153] "Al-Ahed football player Qassem Shamkha is martyred in Aleppo". Al Mayadeen, 4th November 2016. http://www.almayadeen.net/news/sports/711269/حلب-في-يشهيدا-العهد-نادي-لاعب-شمخة-قاسم

Martyr Qassem was a promising player from Al-Ahed young team who became martyr after being killed by Daesh. Martyrs like him are not just football players. We play football, they keep on playing our battle whether it is against Israel or Daesh. He decided to stop with football once he was going to be promoted in the first team in order to think about life. There is always a huge bond between him and us: he is always with us and this is why we went to celebrate him just after we won the title.[154]

While never nominating "The Party of God", Sleiman's positioning and statements loyally replicate Hezbollah's orientation along the national and international affairs. Such cohesion became even more explicitly evident during the celebrations for the sixth title held at the Al-Ahed Stadium along Beirut southern suburbs right after the "private" match with Nejmeh. Among the thousand people who gathered in their own fortress to celebrate the title, we could recognize numerous yellow al-Ahed flag waved together with the same colour of Hezbollah flags. On the same way, the musical accompaniment chose by the management to celebrate the title during the party has shifted from commercial songs to militant chants quite popular around Hezbollah comrades.

Such as in the case of the implicit connections emerged between Al-Aqsa team and the Hamas field inside Bourj el-Barajneh camp, such episodes have further revealed how manifestations of identity and belonging are subtly but deeply entangled with the specificity of the space where they are performed. This is why my fieldwork required a long and in depth-observation especially as concerns the overlapping dimensions of football and politics, with football that in post-war Lebanon tends to be reduced to a tool to renew and duplicate the dynamics of the political system.

[154] Tamim Sleiman (April 2018, 12). Interview in the framework of the shooting for the documentary "Footballization", Beirut.

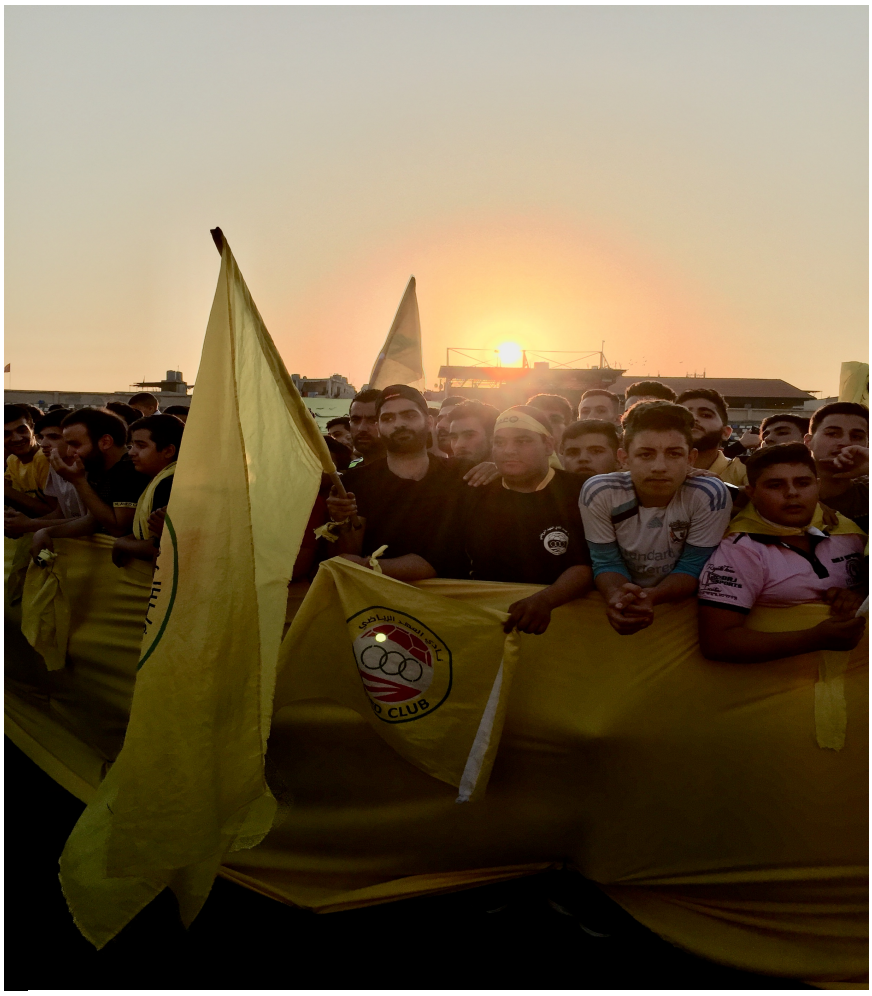


Figure 14 *Al-Ahed fans celebrate the Title in their own stadium,* located in the core of Dahiye showing Hezbollah and Ahed flags. Al-Ahed Stadium, Beirut. 15/04/2018. Picture by the author.

Contextually, we are assisting to the emergence of a growing body of literature dedicated to the study of sports – and particularly football – in Lebanon. Among the others, Al-Masri (2016) and Mouawad (2018) try to challenge the discourse of univocal linkages between political and sectarian figures and groups in order to truly understand the complexity of the entanglement of sports and politics in Lebanon. Far from underestimating sectarianism' role in the country, Mouawad's article on local football seeks to shed light on different areas where the Lebanese people have the chance to render the sectarian variable almost dull, meaningless and anachronistic. The author shows how sports serve as a vital medium for Lebanese citizens to express themselves and reformulate identities and meanings.

This is for instance the case of Al-Masri's ethnography (2016) on the governance of Nejmeh club since its foundation in 1945, that accurately exemplifies how a Lebanese football club is typically made up of several sub communities whose identities cannot be reduced to one political or sectarian affiliation. According to the author, no one club in Lebanon has its patron, board members, general assembly, technical and administrative body of staff, players, or the majority of its fans belonging to just one sectarian or political community. Among the several major teams in the country, Lebanon's most popular team Nejmeh represents by far the most evident case.

Since its inception in 1945, the club has attracted fans from various socio-economic, political, and religious backgrounds (Al-Masri, 2016). With time, the club lost some of this diversity and was eventually bought by Rafic Hariri, the Sunni most influent business and politician, and later on inherited by his son and current Prime Minister Saad Hariri. However, it should be enough to attend some Nejmeh matches from the most popular sectors to notice an evident dichotomy and contrast between the club administration and a big segment of the fans, whose majority belongs to the Lebanese Shia community.

In this regards, several Nejmeh fans with whom I used to attend the matches at the stadium agreed on the attachment and support to the club. "We do not mind Hariri or any other president, we just support the team and our colours. We were born *Nejmewin*[155] and we will die with such colours. We just want to bring home both the Championship and the Cup[156]." Through this account we can at least perceive the complexity of articulations between political, sectarian and sportive affiliation. This is the case of the thousands of Nejmeh supporters who belong to the Lebanese Shia community and find themselves on the side of a team managed by Hezbollah's archrival Saad Hariri.

In this sense, the unveiling and disentanglement occurs in occasion of the direction confrontation between Nejmeh and Hezbollah-affiliated Al-Ahed team. It was right during one derby that Mahmoud – a young Shia guy on his thirties who usually drives from the southern Lebanese border to watch Nejmeh matches every weekend- revealed:

[155] Such a term generally indicates all the Nejmeh supporters.
[156] Amin (October 2016, 11). Open discussion at the stadium, Beirut Sportive Centre.

To me everything is normal. I have always been a Nejmeh fan and I will never change my love for that. We are the best team in Lebanon. Who cares about al-Ahed? Just look at their sectors: they are just a bunch of few people, while we are the best supporters in the country. Al-Ahed is just a new club without history and without prestige. Now that they started winning some titles they believe to have such kind of attractiveness, but this is not our case: we will never leave Nejmeh! And you know what? In terms of football competition the fact that our competitors is currently represented by Al-Ahed is a good chance for us. This means that, as most of the players are Shia such as us, we directly know them and their families: this means that we can directly mock them and their families name by name![157]

Few weeks later I was invited by Mahmoud to attend an international match played by al-Ahed in Asian Football Club against a Bahraini team. Unexpectedly, when we meet in front of the Sportive Centre, Mahmoud was wearing a Nejmeh flag around the neck. After sitting together in the middle of Al-Ahed fans, I can notice that Mahmoud's case is not singular: around the stands there are tens of Nejmeh flags together with few banners with the colours and the logo of other Lebanese teams. "This is not the national League: here we all support Al-Ahed just because it is a Lebanese Team in an international competition. However, I will keep on booing them once back in the Premier League because they have the most skilled players together with Nejmeh".

These brief insights within the Lebanese stadiums, and in particular from the core of the popular standings far from the authorities' stands, contribute to further complicate our common belief about national football. I would dare to summarize this issue as: "Politics matters, but football too". The sport competitions between the different clubs on the pitch cannot be relegated to an irrelevant socio-cultural dimension for the thousands of supporters who weekly attend the stadiums. The repetitiveness of the games, where people (mostly men) of all ages, from various parts of Lebanon simultaneously come together to support a team, mostly rotates around the

[157] Mahmoud (September 2017, 15). Personal interview, Beirut.

90 minutes played on the pitch. The "pitch element" contributes to emphasise the complexity of sharing multiple individual and collective identities: the stadium becomes exemplificative of the many other spaces- such as a border or an urban checkpoint- where a person shifts its positioning and affiliation in view of a specific objective.

5.4 The everydayness of the Lebanon's Football Society

According to Raab (2012), while the literature on Middle Eastern football is rewarding on its own right, it is also a gateway for learning about the societies where it has developed and where it is passionately played and loved. However, despite its popularity and everyday quality, "many still regard football in the Arab World as merely a domain of amusement to attract functional for scopes that extend beyond the football pitch" (Amara, 2014: 8). While most research has conceived Lebanese football as another aprioristic tool to reaffirm the pervasive extension of sectarianism over any social national arena, we have previously analysed how what happens inside and around the Lebanese stadiums question most of our beliefs. When a Lebanese guy from the Shia community mocks the yellow-dressed players from a Hezbollah-affiliated team, he negotiates the hierarchical predominance of politics over football.

From my personal point of view, such a reductionist approach is mostly due to the authors' actual distance from the concrete arena where matches are played by its protagonists: the players and their supporters. Among the scarce sources that deal with sport in Lebanon, the complexity of its football society- whose dominant language is Arabic both inside and outside the stadiums - is mostly overshadowed by few "trustable" English-written sources that keep on mutually reinforcing especially in the international debate. Without claiming to undermine the pervasive political entanglements on football, my work sides with Mouawad's and Al-Masri's attempts to go beyond the overwhelming sectarianization of Lebanese football in order to investigate the everyday connections emerging inside such a social arena.

Such as in any other stadium worldwide, most of the people who attend or play football just do it on a regular base for the pleasure of doing it. Borrowing from

Mahmoud's accounts, we should remind how this very everydayness paradoxically gives its extraordinary appeal. Indeed, one important realization concerning soccer around the world, especially for those to whom the game still seems "foreign", is its everyday quality (Turnbull et al., 2008). As Judith Butler (1999) argues, identities are most of all crafted through mundane practices and utterances that people perform *repetitively*: football is literally loaded with such repetitive occasions.

Repetitiveness and passion constitute two unavoidable features of people's attachment towards football. The French anthropologist Bromberger (1995) describes football games as a kind of ritual that provides an "inexhaustible terrain of interpretation" for those who participate and watch. Also the ritual in Bourj el-Barajneh camp is constituted by multiple trainings along the weekdays and matches played (and watched) during weekends on an overused field on the same way it is spread almost worldwide. Moreover, we observed to which extent football and football teams play a further significant role in the everyday life of a refugee camp, as the everyday dimension of the game comes out to give a rhythm and affect the players' daily life in terms of connections, mobility and belonging to the camp itself.

While there is a tendency by the media and by fans to focus on professional teams and on star players who embody their values and dreams, it is important to pay heed also to the broader sweep of soccer's influence" (Raab & Khalidi, 2016: 2). In this sense, the scarce turnover of Lebanon's football society allows us to reconnect with a kind of football that is not conceived as a "modern sport" tied to a system of global institutions, rather as a daily 'simple playing of games' (Bourdieu, 1978) linked to the dimension of play. While most research exclusively analyses football in Lebanon exclusively as a tool for learning about other aspects of the society, I have tried to prioritize the daily "pitch element" within the analysis of the Lebanon's football society. Namely, I mean practices, discourses and sport results performed thousands of players, supporters, managers and many other figures directly involved in Lebanon's football world.

Its amateur feature (sport is not recognized as a profession in Lebanon) from the bottom to the top series keep all its members within an ordinary scenario, where even

the most skilled players in Lebanon are not considered as exclusive stars. Especially during summer, it is easy to assist around Beirut at informal matches and tournaments where national top players share the pitch with amateur ones in the occasions of numerous football tournaments organized by local groups. This is especially the case of the Ramadan tournaments mentioned in the previous chapter, where the best players in the country "take off" the jersey of the major clubs in order to bolster the performance of their local teams.

On of the most exemplificative cases was represented by Maher Sabra, who had temporarily left Nejmeh -the most supported team in Lebanon- in order to play with the Al-Aqsa team, where he - as a Lebanese citizen- had started his own career. Far from being an elitist society, I would dare to say that Lebanon's football society is rather mostly relegated among the popular sectors of the population. Also due to its socio-economic marginality in the country, refugees and non-nationals have been included in the construction of Lebanon's football society whose they have historically constituted an unavoidable role.

For instance, Mouawad's work (2018) evokes how sports have directly contributed to the integration of the Armenian community in both Lebanon and Syria, while at the same time enabling the community to reimagine and reconstruct its Armenian identity. This was partially due to the fact that Armenian clubs, such as the Homenetmen Beirut Basket Club founded in 1924, were the most prominent on the Lebanese sports scene starting from the 1940s until today. When immediately after the First World War tens of thousands of Armenians from the Ottoman Empire sought refuge in the nascent French mandates of Lebanon and Syria[158], football was already a popular game worldwide.

It comes with no surprise, then, that most of the Armenian clubs were established just few years after the displacement as a way to connect the lost homeland with the national diaspora worldwide. This is why, for instance, "Homenetmen Beirut"

[158] For the detailed history of the Armenians' arrival in Lebanon: Nicola Migliorino, *(Re)constructing Armenia in Lebanon and Syria: Ethno-Cultural Diversity and the State in the Aftermath of a Refugee Crisis* (New York and Oxford, 2008), p. 221.

was established as a Lebanese-Armenian branch just 6 years after the establishment of Homenetmen in Istanbul. After almost one century, Homenetmen constitutes a source of pride for the Armenian community in Lebanon: its colours recall the Armenian flag and the different teams- especially in the case of the Basket – attract thousands of fans every weekend.

Even nowadays in Lebanon, Armenian coaches and managers are generally considered to be the most skilled and are hired by many clubs from different affiliations all around Lebanon. The Armenian sportive presence constitutes a significant paradigm in relation to the role played by sport in enhancing national minorities' role along the history of a troubled country such as Lebanon. In this sense, I focused on how football has constituted an alternative resource in the face of the progressive institutionalized illegalizations of the refugees' socio-spatial visibility in the country. More precisely, how can we frame the Palestinians' -and more recently- Syrians' evolutions and reconfigurations inside the Lebanon's football society?

5.5 The Palestinian football society in Lebanon

5.5.1 The origins

Despite Palestinian refugees significantly outnumbered Armenians since their arrivals, a Palestinian sport scene in Lebanon has never appeared on the main stage. If we refer to the great majority of national newspapers, websites and even sport magazines either in Arabic or in English, a "Palestinian sport scene" does not even seem to exist around Lebanon. Since the beginning of my fieldwork, I was looking for oral memories, old pictures and sporadic news recollected on social media agencies and other collectives based inside the Palestinian camps in order to track down the troubled history of refugees' sport avenue in the country and link it with the current situation. At the end, a glimpse into seventy years of Palestinian sport- mainly football- in Lebanon constituted the gateway for learning it relations with the host society as well as a resource to better understand the presence of the newly arrived players from Syria.

At regional level, Palestinians' "relationship" with football has been crossing three troubled centuries of history spread between the homeland and the exile in the

region. One of the very few trustable sources on the history of Palestinian football was published both in Arabic and in English by Issam Khalidi, an independent scholar born in Jerusalem and currently resident in the USA. Indeed, Khalidi's "One Hundred Year of Football in Palestine" constitutes a pillar throughout my research especially with regard to its insights into the origins and the first development before 1948-Nakba.

According to the author, football was probably introduced to Palestine in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century by the missionary schools[159] which spread all over the country and acquired a spread popularity during the English Mandate Period. As it will constitute a frequent recurrence until today, violent events destroyed decades of previous preliminary development: the destructions and displacements occurred during 1948-Nakba also paralyzed the whole Palestinian sport, with hundreds of clubs, schools, playing grounds and sports media forced to shut down or disappear from the public scene.

Despite the overwhelming loss, a forced exile for around 700.000 Palestinians turned into a platform for reproducing and seeking their belonging and will to return to the homeland. In this context, such as per Armenian diaspora described before, even the sport turned into a tool to show these feelings of nationalist attachment and refusal of the Israeli claims over their homeland. In the Diaspora, Lebanon, Syria, Jordan, and in the refugee camps in the West Bank and Gaza, football became a way for the Palestinians to prove that they existed; a way for them to maintain their national identity (Khalidi, 2013).

Despite the scarce material conditions in which Palestinians were living after the Nakba, many social-athletic clubs were established. Most of them were in the refugee camps, and these clubs were named after the cities and villages were abandoned during the Nakba, or named after the areas that had been settled. Many clubs were established even in Lebanon just few years after the Nakba favoured by UNRWA material support: such as per al-Aqsa Club and many other current Palestinian teams in the country, most of the teams' denominations were directly

[159] In his memoirs, Khalil Totah "Turbulent Times in Palestine: Diaries of Khalil Totah 1886-1955", by Thomas M. Ricks, Institute for Palestine Studies, Passia 2009, mentions that in the summer (1902) the house of Essa Abu Shahla – right across the street from the Girls' School (northwest) was rented. The accommodations were not half-as-good as the old place. The school also rented the field south of the building for football.

inspired by national symbolic place related to the homeland. Among the others, Khalidi recalls the foundation of Nadi Shababb al-Arab in Bidawi Camp in 1951, Nadi al-Qarama in Tal-Azza'tar in 1953, Nadi al-Hilwa in Ein al-Hilwa Camp and Nadi Filastin in Dhibia Camp in 1958.

According to many Palestinian former football players or supporters met throughout my fieldwork, al-Karmel Club from Shatila was the first team to be founded in Beirut area at the beginning of the Sixties. During those decades, tens of sport clubs have spread around the Palestinian camps in contemporary with the expansion of the Palestinian National liberation (PLO) movement and its revolution. Indeed, the period 1969 – 1970 is considered to be the beginning stage of the sport movement in the Diaspora. Political conditions in these countries where Palestinian refugees lived, and the relations between the regimes, and the PLO, had their impacts on sports and football. This is why the decision by the PLO in 1971 to move the Palestine Supreme Council for Youth Care (1968) to Lebanon effected the most flourishing period for Palestinians' sport in the country.

Abou Khaled, who founded Al-Aqsa Club in 1971, nostalgically reminds to the young generation of the team how the prestige of Palestinian players and teams throughout that decades has never been reached in the following years. "There were great Palestinian players at that time: have you ever heard about Jamal al-Khatib? He played with Pelè here in Beirut in 1975! Indeed, he was the Palestinian hero of Lebanese football. You should really meet him[160]". Among the old generation of Palestinians who usually attend the Hamas Field, no one doubts: Jamal al-Khatib was the best player of a golden age for the Palestinian Football. Some of them still keep in their own houses around the camps some memories (mostly pictures, newspapers and just in once case a video) of Palestinian players and matches.

5.5.2 "We were not representing Palestine: we were Palestine"

[160] Abou Khaled (January 2017, 15). Personal interview, Beirut.

Trying to reconstruct an historical detailed narration of the Palestinian football society is further complicated by the absence of written sources and the disappearance of many former protagonists. This is why I resorted to follow Abou Khaled's advice and started rounding any football field around Beirut in order to track down the protagonists of that time. Surprisingly, it was quite easy to enter in contact with Jamal al-Khatib since he is still one of the prominent figures – most people call it "the ambassador" - of the Palestinian football in Lebanon. The connections between his human and sport biography with the Lebanon's football society has constituted a significant thread throughout my fieldwork since his career trajectory -mostly played between the Civil War times- allowed me to better understand the overlapping presence of Palestinian, Lebanese and Syrian players in the country.

This is how Jamal recounts his debut:

I was born in 1952 in Beirut: one I was young, 7 years only, my brothers- I have 4 brothers- used to play football. I was a little boy and went with them to see football. I loved football so much that once I was 9 years old Ansar asked me to join and play with them. I used to play with them from the third team until the first team: when I was 16 years old I played one season in the first division team. My career as a (famous) football player began at that time: I played with Ansar just one year, then Nejmeh club saw me and wanted to buy me from me. At that time, Nejmeh paid me around 1.400 Lebanese lira, that was my transfer: now it's about little than one dollar. At that time 1 dollar was equal to 2,5 lira. When the Nejmeh saw me he said: "how can I pay such an amount of money for this little boy? I do not think he is a good player." Then the coach intervened by saying: "Ok mister Omar please give me the money and do not speak like that, because I know football more than you". In 1969 my career with Nejmeh began: here is when I started becoming famous. In Lebanon till now we do not have professional players, but I was the best player in Lebanon at that time and my fame was widespread around the country from 1970 to 1991.[161]

[161] Jamal al-Khatib (October 2017, 25). Beirut Qasqas Stadium

Palestinian players, clubs and leagues reached the top of popularity at the beginning of the Seventies. In this sense, the Palestinian sport journalist Ayman Hawash argues:

During the early Seventies the Palestinian League was so influent that it was even staged at the Medina ar-Riyadie in Beirut, the largest stadium in Lebanon. The best Lebanese players were also playing in the Palestinian league. Lebanese competitions stopped but at the same time the Palestinian organizations were rich at that time and could finance the players. At the same time, Since 1967 and still during the 1990s with the Israeli occupation in Palestine was preventing Palestinian people to organize and move freely, so the organization of National Palestinian teams were relocated in Lebanon. Therefore in several sports it was Palestinians from Lebanon that were played in the national team under the name of "Palestinian National Team".[162]

The national team was mostly represented by players from the Lebanese branch of Supreme Council. However, when this team played against Arab teams, it included Palestinian players from Syria, Jordan, Libya, and Egypt (Khalidi, 2007). In Lebanon, the Palestinian selected team was practicing football on the municipal field in Beirut, at Beirut Stadium. Indeed, Palestinians in Lebanon were the representatives of Palestine. Despite Palestine was just recognized at international level only by the United Arab Football Association (UAFA) and individual Arab Football Associations, the scenario of Palestinian refugees in the guise of the official representatives of their own homeland sounds like even unimaginable today. Such a perspective should be reconnected to the major role played by the diaspora in the nationalist issue and in supporting the PLO during 50 years of resistance (Hanafi, 2003).

Jamal al-Khatib, who was the star of the National Team, argues:

We were not representing Palestine: We were Palestine at international level! I was 16 years once I started with the national teams, and we played against national teams of Algeria, Tunisia and Egypt. It was not official matches, but there were matches organized between the other Arab federations. In Tunisia I was 16 years and I scored

[162] Ayman Hawash (July 2017, 22). Personal interview, Beirut.

the first gol leading 1-0. I was wearing the number 8 as all along my career. After the match we went for shopping around the city and I was wearing the t-shirt of Palestine with my number on that. When I wanted to buy anything around the shopkeepers told me: " Are you the one scoring the goal? Please get everything for free. They loved Palestine that much". Most of our support was around the Arab States, while very few support and matches from Europe.[163]

According to the Palestinian Federation Delegate Majdi: "During the Seventies we have very strong league, with a lot of Lebanese players were joining the Palestinian league. We had so many that the number of Lebanese was around the same as the Palestinian one: so the league was a kind of equal league[164]." During that time, there were plenty of football matches between the Palestinian club teams in Lebanon and their counterparts in Syria and also between selected teams from Palestinians in both Lebanon and Syria (Khalidi, 2007). Moreover, such as the case of Al-Khatib playing for Nejmeh, most of the Palestinian national team players at that time were also playing in the Lebanese club teams; many of them were prominent and they brought victories to their clubs.

5.*5.3 The Palestinian Legend of the Lebanese football*

The inclusion of Palestine within Lebanon's football society was mainly due to the absence of caps imposed on the numbers of non-Lebanese players in the league, which were instead introduced in the Nineties and have limited refugees' participation in the up to today. Instead, it was the "parallel" Palestine Football Association that developed new criteria for the admission of the Palestinian players who exclusively played for Palestinian teams. Such measure resulted in alienating from the Palestinian national team the most qualified players who were playing at that time for the most important Lebanese clubs. Jamal al-Khatib was among them:

At my time there were plenty of Palestinians in any Lebanese football team of the first division: just in Ansar and Nejmeh we were around 6-7 Palestinians players. But after

[163] Jamal al-Khatib (October 2017, 25). Personal interview, Beirut Qasqas Stadium.
[164] Majdi Adam (October 2016, 3). Personal interview, Shatila camp.

the Palestinian Federation decide to ban from the National team the Palestinian players who were playing in the Lebanese League, I decided to focus on my career and continued with Nejmeh. And do you know what happened at the end? Football is amazing: with the exclusion from the Palestinian national, I became the only one playing in the Lebanese National Team as a Palestinian. I was provided with a passport just for the use of football that I had to give it back at the airport once back from the matches abroad.[165]

His choice of giving up the Palestinian National team in order to continue his own career with the most successful Lebanese club invokes the complexity of reconciling the individual will with a collective national identity, especially in the case of refugees who had never experienced the material connection with their homeland. The issue of "reshaping" belonging and legal documents will emerge several times along Jamal's sport career and human biography, contributing to regard his career as peculiar as well as explanatory among the wide spectrum of Lebanon's refugee persons.

Above all, Jamal's acquisition of a new Lebanese peculiar - just for the sake of football- is peculiar and unexpected, as Lebanon has always strongly contrasted any attempt to naturalize Palestinians since their arrival in the country (Ghandour, 2017). Naturalisations can be explained in regards to low participation rates in national sport and the desire of both countries to gain international prestige though sport. Indeed, Jamal's sport trajectories remind the naturalization processes of foreign-board athletes adopted especially by Gulf Countries since the Nineties. Even in this regard, Jamal's trajectory is pioneering because it was adopted at the beginning of the Seventies, when the mission-passport tradition was not even established at international level (Tinaz & Reiche, 2018).

In Jamal's career as a Lebanese player has lasted just two years as Lebanese football completely stopped in 1975 with the outburst of the Civil War: the conflict had negative impact on sports and affected all Palestinian and Lebanese youth activities. In 1976, the location of the supreme council moved to Damascus because of the civil war in Lebanon and most of the football matches were suspended. With the suspensions of

[165] Jamal al-Khatib (October 2017, 25). Personal interview, Beirut Qasqas Stadium.

any official league and national team, the most skilled players were attracted by the opportunity to play abroad and escape the war at the same time.

Predictably, that was the case of Jamal al-Khatib, whose fame and talent had crossed Lebanon's border and reached the Gulf. This is why the Qatari Royal Family offered him and his club an astonishing proposal in order to move to the country. Beyond the monetary aspect of the agreement, the real interesting aspect for the research is represented by the fact that Jamal was immediately granted a "full-use" Qatari passport.

The first day I was in Qatar I was granted the nationality and started playing with the national team. My Qatari passport was even stating: "Jamal Khatib, Born in Doha". I was the best player and top scorer in Qatari League. The Emir called me after few months by saying: "Jamal, the Nejmeh team does not want you to play in Qatar". They did not want to sell me to Qatar and therefore the Emir issued a Royal Order allowing me to play with a little team that was managed by his brother. He told me: "Jamal please do not tell anybody that you play here." All the teams in Qatar wanted me to play with them, offering any kind of Mercedes Cars or any other thing. But I could not accept any offer because I was allowed to play just with the Emir's club.
I played in Qatar for 2 years both in the team and the national team.
There, once the Gulf Cup was going to start, the prince of Saudi Arabia, Dubai, Iraq and other teams refused to play vs Qatar because I had previously played for Lebanon. And Fifa does not allow anyone to play for multiple national teams at senior level. So I was not allowed to play in the Gulf Country and came back to Lebanon in 1977. However, the sheikh kept on proposing to buy me from Nejmeh: everyday he called to offer 50.000$ more up to offer 200.000$. At those times not even Maradona was that worthy! But still Nejmeh refused and I had to go back. In spite of that, I kept on renewing my Qatari passport in Beirut until 2000: they proposed me to stay in Qatar in spite of football, but I was still young and wanted to keep on playing football. So in 2000 they asked me to renew the passport in Doha, and I did not go there anymore.[166]

[166] Ibid

Jamal – the Palestinian Legend of the Lebanese Football- is still identified in the country as the only player in the world who represented three different national teams along his career. While Jamal's multiple national identities and passports sound anachronistic and unimaginable if compared with the difficulties experienced by most refugees in Lebanon, the analysis of his vicissitudes cannot be relegated as a "lucky exception", but rather should be reconnected with the main research questions. His biography recalls how, in the face of immobility and lack of valid documents, sport allows acquiring and playing your identity through strategies that ground on multiple belonging and affiliations with a football team and a broader football community.

Not coincidentally, even his nickname - The Palestinian Legend of the National Football- evokes this double membership. Moving from an "in-between" position shifting between multiple national identities, Al-Khatib has conserved his function as mediator and gate-keeper for the Palestinian football community in Lebanon even after the golden age. Even during the Lebanese Civil War, for instance, his figure has emerged as one of the few able to negotiate between rival sides far beyond his Palestinian membership. For instance, everybody around the football fields in Beirut still has vivid memories about the "Game for National Unity" organized in 1983. As expected, Jamal was the star of the game:

In 1978 two different federations were born: one in West and one in East Beirut, that was the only one internationally recognized by Western Federations. On the west side there were Nejmeh, Ansar, Tadamoun, Safa. From the other side Racing, Homemtmen, Shabab al Mazra. This is why, in order to try to give a different signal, we were asked in 1983 to play a friendly match between the two divided federation. We went to play as a selection form Nejmeh to visit Racing Club in Bourj Hammoud Stadium. I was playing with Nejmeh at that time as all along my career and as a Palestinian I was worried about crossing and going to the east. Some people reassured me: "do not worry Jamal, you are a famous football player and nothing is gonna happen to you." So we went there to play and the stadium was fully booked and started insulting and booing the opponent team.

At that match, we scored the first goal and leading the match but 10 minutes the referee whistled a unfair penalty for Racing: it was really all but not a penalty! I started arguing with the referee, who said: " Please Mr. Khatib do not create any kind of problem". I could not and keep on saying that it was not a penalty. So as a way to protest we sat all together in the middle field. At that point out of the sudden thirteen armed guys from the Militias appeared on the field and came close to us: I was afraid that- as being Palestinians- they could threaten me. They invited us to keep on with the game, but at the end they told me: " Please come with us, we will put you on a car and take you back to the Western part". So we arrived at the Mathaf- the national museum- where there was the checkpoint: there we crossed and broke the checkpoint and was safely back. Even as Palestinian, I broke the checkpoint!"[167]

The match was held in the eastern Beirut suburbs of Bourj Hammoud, which was at that time the only sport facility still available for playing football. This is due to the fact that most of the stadiums were turned into military bases. Even the already mentioned Sports City – the largest stadium in the country- was an ammunition dump for Yasser Arafat's PLO. During the Israeli invasion in 1982 the Stadium was repeatedly bombed by Israeli jets during the 1982 siege of Beirut: so that its giant, smashed exterior looked like a nightmare denture[168]. With the Israeli invasion in Lebanon, many clubs and youth centres were destroyed, the headquarters of the Supreme Council were invaded, and many documents and data were destroyed and confiscated.

The expulsion of the Palestinian leadership, and militants in general, from Lebanon, and the removal of the Supreme Council and sport associations to Tunis in particular, stumbled the progress of the sport movement, and had its impact on club teams and activities. What was built through a period of fourteen years was destroyed in a few days. The invasion was a blow for every sphere of life of the Lebanese and Palestinian people, including the athletic movement. The damaged Sports City became a natural holding centre for prisoners controlled by Phalangist and Israeli soldiers. Jamal al-Khatib was one of them:

---

[167] Ibid

[168] "Another war on terror Another war on terror. Another proxy army. Another mysterious massacre. And now, after 19 years, perhaps the truth at last...". The Indipendent, 28/11/2001. https://www.independent.co.uk/news/world/middle-east/another-war-on-terror-another-proxy-army-another-mysterious-massacre-and-now-after-19-years-perhaps-9255784.html

In 1982 Camille Chamoun Stadium was destroyed and then occupied by Israeli military forces: all the Palestinians were there summoned to appear and we were grouped in around 7-8 lines. When I was called to appear, masked soldiers asked me why so many people used to greet me. I was asked my name and my profession. I told them: "Do you see this sport stadium? When I used to come here, 60.000 persons used to stand up for me." He looked like impressed and kept on asking me: "These people are from Fatah? Are you Fatah?"[169] *I answered: "What's Fatah? I just play football". The soldier looked at the mask and said: " Let him go".*

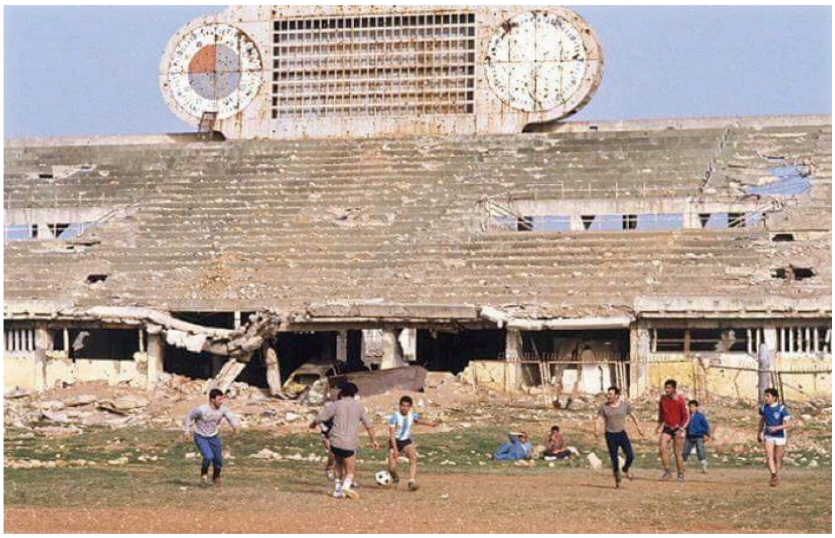


Figure 15 *Playing football inside the destroyed Beirut Sports City*. (Source: unknown).

5.6 Palestinian and Syrian players in the Lebanese League

5.6.1 "The first Palestinian is like a Lebanese"

The catastrophic consequences of the Lebanese Civil War stumbled the progress of the Palestinian sport movement with a sever impact on club teams and activities (Khalidi, 2013). Despite several Palestinian teams tried to continue their activities throughout the war, most of the official competitions were suspended and the clubs suffered from a chronic lack of political and economic support after PLO was driven out of Lebanon and relocated in Tunis. This was the case of Ali, who was playing for al-Aqsa Team

[169] Ibid

during the Seventies and was deported with his family to Tunis in 1982. Just after 15 years of forced secondary exile he managed to come back to Bourj el-Barajneh camp, where he currently manages the Hamas Field:

Indeed, we had a very strong team at those times! Thousands of people used to gather to support us: football matches were the only occasions for people to distress from the war. However, everything changed with Israeli invasion in 1982. Five of us had to leave to Tunis, but we tried to keep the contacts with Lebanon and reorganize our own football team. [170]

Starting from 1986, several Palestinian teams reorganized their own structure and activities and a new nationally selected team was created. While Palestinian camps went into the most violent phase of the conflict with the War of Camps (1985-1987), the reorganization of a national team was supposed to coincide with as a new starting point after the evacuation to Tunis. Some friendly matches were organized against teams from the west Beirut sector such as Nejmeh and Ansar: despite the level was below the previous teams, the Palestinians' performance resulted far beyond expectations.

However, many Palestinian people met throughout my fieldwork used to repeat that the post-war period had been worse than the war itself. Abou Mohammed, who spent the whole Civil War inside Bourj el-Barajneh camp, told me several times during our conversations inside the Hamas Field: "At least during the war there was some hope, now we have nothing at all."[171]In the aftermath of the Civil war, the preservation of Lebanese unity and the revised sectarian political system demanded the continued ostracizing of Palestinian refugees (Khawaja, 2011).

The post-Taif period emphasized the problematic relations between the host State and the Palestinian community, with the latter considered as the scapegoat for the Lebanese civil war and being marginalized since considered the "enemy within" by the local society (Sfeir, 2010). In line with the general political decision of imposing a regimen of social and economic restrictions towards the refugee population, various ministerial decrees (No. 1/289 of 18 December 1982 and Ministerial Decree of 15 December 1995) prohibited Palestinians from around 72 trades and professions.

[170] Ali (October 11, 2016). Personal interview, Bourj el-Barajneh camp.
[171] Abou Mohammed (June 11, 2016). Personal interview, Bourj el-Barajneh camp

Sport in this strict list was not directly cited, but just because in Lebanon sport activities are not regarded as professional sectors. However, the limitations over Palestinians' presence inside Lebanon's sport society did not delay. With the reorganization of a unified Lebanese Football Association, Palestinian players were turned into the foreign element of the national football. For the first time in its history - with several Palestinian players who used to play in each Lebanese team - the LFA introduced caps to limit the Palestinian presence inside Lebanese teams. Everything changed with the regulation that prohibited the participation of more than three "foreign" players in any Lebanese club.

The end of the Lebanese conflict sanctioned the distinct affinities and membership according to the national belonging: in particular, the marginalization of Palestinian refugees deeply impacted over refugees' daily life even inside a football field. In this regard, it is really interesting within our analysis to look at how Palestinian players assume a unique position right at the end of the war. Due to the complications related with finding out specific written sources on such dispositions, my fieldwork also implied a laborious in-depth research at the Lebanese Football Association (LFA) headquarters in Beirut. One of the LFA delegates revealed:

Our leagues include four divisions with around 100 teams officially affiliated with the Federation. Within the 12 teams in the first divisions, three foreigners are allowed to play and six can be totally hired in the squad. Plus, you can have a Palestinian on the field. In the second division just two foreigners and one Palestinian are allowed on the field. In both the cases, the first Palestinian is considered as a Lebanese, while the rest are foreigners. Hypothetically, you can even hire and deploy four Palestinians in a first-division club: the first one is like a Lebanese and the others as foreigners.[172]

According to such regulations, Palestinian refugees in Lebanon stand out in an "exceptional" position: far from being considered as nationals, they are reduced to a unique and "softer" version of foreigners. Taking into account the quantitative presence of Palestinian players in the country, the Lebanese federation aims to

[172] Bassem Mohammed (October 2017, 12). LFA headquarter, Beirut.

strategically include very few among the refuge top players through the categorical distinction of the national membership. Far from the era when Jamal al-Khatib and many other players constituted a significant contribution for Lebanese football, Palestinian football players born and raised in Lebanon are currently discriminated in the opportunity to reach the main spots of the national football along a general framework of socio-economic marginalizations imposed on refugees.

According to the Palestinian Football Association delegate Majdi:

Here the regulations for us Palestinian are very strict and hard. Just imagine that we have around 10.000 Palestinian players in Lebanon and around 100 Lebanese clubs. Since the law allows just one Palestinian to play in each club, you can imagine the proportion. One can play on the field, while you can hire 2-3 in the squad. If you already have one Palestinian in the team, what will you do?

For example in the first division you can have up to 6 foreigners, you could bring 6 Palestinians whose one in the field and five regarded as foreigners. While in the first division teams prefer players from Brazil as well as from Africa, one Palestinian usually plays because 'Awal Filistini methel Lubnani' (The first Palestinian is like a Lebanese). Bust just one, while for the others Palestinians are like foreigners.

This is mainly what we are trying to break down: sport for all. But we cannot because it's a political issue. They say: "we let Palestinians play in the Lebanese sport, they will forget Palestine. If we let Palestinians work, they will forget Palestine". They are crazy. Because your country is always in your heart: nobody can break it. This is not just in the sport sector: doctors, engineers and in any field. It's servile cruel. They are closing the way in our future."[173]

Therefore, the chance for a Palestinian player to emerge out of the "anonymity" of the minor and Palestinian leagues are reduced to just a bunch of spots out of thousands of candidates. The other minor leagues are mostly based on amateur players who do not even get a regular salary. Within this perspective, therefore, Palestinian players' trajectory is even more precarious due to the caps imposed on the major

[173] Majdi Adam (October 2016, 3). Shatila camp.

Lebanese teams. Just the most talented players usually emerge on the 24 top spots available (12 in the first and 12 in the second vision). This was the case of Abed, Al-Aqsa captain and probably the best player of the team:

After playing all my life with Al-Aqsa, I was invited by Ansar to join the club. My experience with them was interrupted after that another Palestinian joined the club: there was no space for both of us and I left for another club. This is why I joined Ahli Saida club and played four seasons in the Lebanese second division. I used to earn 700 dollar per month, but what can you do in Lebanon with that amount of money? This is why I started working in Saleh's factory in the morning and going to training in Saida at 2pm. Football was my second job, but at least I managed to buy my house in the camp thanks to that. Just three years ago I left Ahli and the Lebanese football after that I broke my knee for the third time. I was thirty at that time and at that age you must realize that there cannot be future with football, especially if you are Palestinian. This is why I left the club and went back to a full-time job in the factory. Now I just play with al-Aqsa in the evening and work at Saleh's factory during the day. He is my boss during the day and my coach by night![174]

Such as in Abed's case, the local Palestinian team turns into an exposition that allows the most talented players to be recruited by the Lebanese teams. However, an unavoidable precariousness conditions even the ones who manage to reach the top clubs. Due to the modest business size of the Lebanese sport sector, even most of the football players from the top divisions forced to find a second parallel occupation. Indeed, the cap imposed on the number of Palestinians per team force the players to engage in a sort of intra-national competition among the best refugee players. Battout, who was part of the al-Aqsa "golden age" together his Abed and Nassar at the early 2000s, reminds:

Al-Aqsa club was like a door to enter and to start improving yourself, especially since the coach is a very good one. Not only on the pitch but even outside. So the relationship between me, the club, the coach and the president and the players go far beyond a time.

[174] Abed (April 2017, 5). Personal interview, Bourj el-Barajneh camp.

It's more like a family. So I feel like my family needs me. But at some point you have time conflict between matches in the Lebanese league and the ones with al-Aqsa. For this reason I cannot be with them at any match.
I started my career in the Lebanese League with the under 14 team of Shabab al-Arabi. We were playing a friendly game at Qasqas and the coach noticed me and we signed the contract just one hour before the market deadline. I was afraid of signing a contract, because it was my first experience with them. This is why I asked an opinion to some of the expert people here in the camp about Shabab al Arabi team and the coach.[175]

Questioned about any problems occurred throughout his career as Palestinian player in the Lebanese League, he argues:

Being Palestinian is the main problem. Being a Palestinian here in Lebanon is a problem, not only in football! When you are Palestinian player you are supposed to be the best, to be qualified in order to be chosen by other teams. Because any time you have the opportunity to have only one Palestinian player. So if you are a talented guy and there is another talented Palestinian in the team, you have to be better than him. And here the coach is in a difficult situation since he would like to join both but cannot. So every time I go to a team I have to check the eventual presence of other Palestinian players. Even now in my current team there is a Palestinian left-wing player. The same role as mine and the same nationality! So to be honest I played the first five games until I picked an injury, and then he replaced me. Now that I am back he is back to the bench outside the 18-player squad. And I am really sorry for him because he is a really good guy but he is losing the chance of playing because of me. So for several times I was asking the managers: "do you have any Palestinian player in the squad?". Because I do not want to be involved in this competition and then close the chance to anyone else.[176]

The limitations imposed on the Palestinian players risk provoking intra-Palestinian competitions for the acquisition of the only available spot. With the

[175] Battout (October 2017, 1). Personal interview, Shatila camp.
[176] Ibid

emphasis more focused on the national provenance rather than the technical skills on the field, such dispositions unavoidably influence in a negative way the players' career. While Battout had dropped to play in the Lebanese third division after facing several quarrels with Lebanese teams during the last seasons, Nassar has rapidly decided to quit elite Lebanese football in order to open up his own business in the camp.

Football is everything in my life, but here in Lebanon as Palestinians we do not have any future. If you are Palestinian and look for a spot in the Lebanese teams you are looked with suspect. After Al-Aqsa I started my career in the young team of Ansar when I was 14 years old. But after two years another Palestinian joined the club: I do now know whether he was more skilled than me, but for sure he had more wasta! This is why I left them and went back to play just with al-Aqsa.[177]

The sport biographies described above seem to contest Iskander's reflection mentioned in the previous chapter on the uniqueness of football in the Middle East as the as "the ultimate meritocracy that defies the omnipresent *wasta*"[178]. Lebanon's football system excludes at institutional levels the great majority of non-citizens players in the country with the imposition of a detailed cap on Palestinians and foreigners. Since 2011, such dynamics of exclusions - that retrace the institutionalized social marginalization of refugees adopted in the country in the aftermath of the Lebanese Civil War- have affected the sport career of many football recently resettled from Syria.

5.6.2 The exclusion of Syrian players from the Lebanese League

Such as any other aspect of the national social arena, Lebanon's football arena is not spared from the arrival of thousands of Syria's amateur and elite football players from Syria. Syrian football players have always been regarded among the most skilled at regional level, with a long-standing tradition of Syrian players acquired by the top Lebanese clubs since the Syrian protectorate over the country. As a result of the current

[177] Nassar (March 8, 2017). Personal interview, Bourj el-Barajneh camp
[178] Iskander, Adel, Geddo and messianic football, Egypt Independent, 5 August 2010, http://www.egyptindependent.com/opinion/geddo-and-messianic-football

conflict, the Syrian league has shrunk geographically, with teams playing only in areas where government exerts control and many talented players escaped out of the country.

While the Syrian football stars had already left the country before the war for joining Gulf teams, tens of former professional players and thousands of young skilled guys have recently settled to Lebanon. Despite their potentiality on the pitch, all the Syrian players unavoidably end up to shelve their dreams of becoming professional players in Lebanon. As Syrians currently based in Lebanon, they are considered foreigners.

"And here clubs are not interested in hiring Syrians: they prefer bringing "exotic" players from abroad. If a president hires a Brazilian player it sounds better than a Syrian, no matter his talent" says Abou Ammar, the director of the Syrian Academy mentioned in the previous chapter. This trend is confirmed by the LFA delegates even as concerns the 2018/2019 season: the 12 Lebanese first division clubs will have a total 36 foreign players from 17 countries. Among them, excluded circa 6 Palestinians players disguised as "Lebanese", there is only one Syrian player to represent the Asian continent. All the other foreign players are hired from Africa and South America.

Bassem Mohammed also confirms such attitude during our interview at the LFA headquarter. Questioned about the strategies adopted by the top clubs in order to hire Palestinian and foreigner players, he answers:

As per the foreigners, there are agents with plenty players and have contacts with coaches and team managers here in Lebanon. In other cases, there are sponsors and people who live abroad and they choose the player to send in Lebanon in order to join the clubs. This is especially the case of African countries such as Ghana, Senegal and Nigeria where there is a settled Lebanese community in the country. While concerning Palestinians, there are numerous camps around and even a league for Palestinians: some of the Palestinian clubs are close to some Lebanese clubs like Ansar, Tadamoun Sour. However, there is no special scouting, it is more a matter of personal and club relations.[179]

[179] Bassem Mohammed (October 2017, 12). LFA headquarter, Beirut.

As national membership still constitutes an unavoidable obstacle for non-citizens, informal relations materialize as influent resources to transcend such restrictions. This situation recalls the dynamics narrated in the previous chapters as regards the potentiality of intra-refugee relations to navigate the socio-spatial hierarchies imposed on their own daily life. We saw in the previous chapter how his presence inside Al-Aqsa team revealed an unavoidable resource for navigating his illegality and contemporarily allowing him to continue the football career.

Yazan, who managed to reinvent a new life and a sport career with the acquisition of a new Palestinian-Lebanese identity, has represented the most emblematic situation as far as concerns my research: his case is quite singular if we consider the scale of the newly arrived people from Syria. According to the LFA regulations, Palestinians from Syria are considered as foreigner due to their Syria-made documents. In this sense, he would have not been allowed to play inside the Lebanese league. However, according to a plan elaborated with his teammates and friends, the acquisition of the document was designed to be functional for playing in a fourth-division Lebanese clubs.

Here is how he managed to start his sport career in Lebanon:

The coach proposed me to play in the Lebanese League: according to them I had both the skills and the talent. Moreover, at that time I had also got the document! Battout, who was already playing in the Lebanese league, knew a coach who was looking for a striker. Therefore, we went together for a test, where I scored 4 goals in one hour. Thanks to them, I managed to sign a contract. And I had to do it with the Palestinian-Lebanese document. This is why I am still playing with the fake name: no one in the Lebanese club knows about my fake identity. This is why it is not really easy: can you imagine playing in the pitch with teammates who invite you for a pass by calling it with a name you do not recognize as yours? Sometimes I do not even realize they are calling me![180]

[180] Yazan (June 2017, 3). Personal interview, Bourj el-Barajneh camp.

Yazan's peculiar (but not unique) case has significantly influenced my fieldwork as it allowed me to observe how numerous persons resort to the most unexpected solutions in order to be continue their own passion Despite the problems related to lack of understanding with his teammates on the pitch, Yazan has managed to find a spot in the Lebanese League through the support of his Palestinian teammates already connected with the official national league. I have observed how the Palestinian sport arena has revealed as a fundamental resource for many refugee players far beyond the geographical perimeter of a refugee camp. Next pages will focus on the multiple unexpected entanglements emerged between the official Lebanon's football society and the refugees' league scattered around the Palestinian camps.

5.7 The Palestinian leagues in Beirut

5.7.1 An active sport movement

With the removal of PLO from Beirut, Palestinians suffered from the lack of any Palestinian authority able to represent refugees' positions in the country and the connected absence of any economic support to refugees' activity. Concerning sport, what was built through a period of fourteen years was destroyed in a few days after the Israeli invasion in the country. Moreover, in the framework of the Israeli-Palestinian negotiations, the Palestinian sport hub has rapidly abandoned Lebanon in order to relocate in Ramallah.

Following the advent of the Palestine National Authority (PNA) in 1994, the Palestine Football Federation was set up, with a membership that included 259 clubs from all over Palestine. In 1998, the Federation obtained membership in FIFA and, accordingly, the Palestinian national team had the right to participate in Asian, Arab, and world championships.[181] "The Nineties were really the black period for Palestinian sport in Lebanon. Such as in many other sectors, we simply did not exist at that time. People in the camp were regretting the war times!"[182] says Majdi during one of our frequent meeting in Shatila.

[181] Ghattas G., the Palestine Football Federation, This Week in Palestine, June 2008. http://thisweekinpalestine.com/details.php?id=2486&ed=154&edid=154
George Ghattas was PFA Vice-president until 2008 and acting president when Ahmad Afifi could not act from Gaza after 2006.
[182] Majdi (June 2017, 1). Personal interview, Shatila camp.

It took several years for the Palestinian sports to go through the process of recovering; regional councils have been rebuilt regionally in Beirut, north, south, and al-Biqa' (Khalidi, 2013). These branch councils regained the members of many clubs which were joining these councils before the War and were currently living a reconstruction phase. This was for instance the case of Al-Aqsa team in Bourj el-Barajneh as reported by the former coach Ayman:

When I started training Al-Aqsa it was basically two years the club was suspended, it was a stuck team without players. Once I and Hajj Abed came into the team, we managed to recruit players and started collecting players in order to restore the team: someone would give us 50$, others 100$ and we managed to fix the team. Before leaving Al-Aqsa, around 2003-2005, it was – if not the best – one of the best three Palestinian teams in Lebanon.[183]

Even without an institutional support in terms of political and economic support, the reorganization of Palestinian sport during the early 2000s has generated a significant active sport movement. Many clubs were restored through the collective efforts of individuals and groups affiliated with the club in several ways. Palestinian camps, in this sense, constitute the strategic location where most of these clubs have focused their own activities. According to Ayman Hawash, the Palestinian sport journalist and former Al-Aqsa coach:

Other clubs for example have more than one sport: Nadi al-Aqsa for example still has the karate club together with football. Basically if they are called "nadi" they should have teams playing in more than one sport. In Beddawi many clubs also have ping-pong and volleyball, whose team since the Seventies was travelling around the world to play with the national team: they were not representing Palestinians from Lebanon, they were Palestine. We also had a national hero in karate-MMA, Nizar Mahrouz, who won several competitions in America and Asia: we worked in the Khalil martial art club in Beddawi that won around 15 medals in the Mediterrenean games. But for sure football is the most spread: you know that this is a "loib shabiyaa" (a popular game) and we

[183] Ayman Awash (July 22, 2017). Personal interview, Beirut

have several clubs all over Lebanon. Just in Ain el Hilweh and Beddawi we have around 20 teams: all around Lebanon we have around 120 teams currently playing football.

As mentioned by Hawash, teams that are based in the camps around Tripoli and Saida have historically represented the Palestinian football spearhead. Beyond merely individual performances, such prevalence is due both to the size of the population and the architecture of the camps. Unsurprisingly, Beddawi and Ein el-Hilweh camps are also the only camps where we can find a regular 11-player football field. In Beirut, where I mainly played with Al-Aqsa and also carried out most of my fieldwork, Palestinians need to find other locations out of the camps.

However, despite security and logistic issues presented in the previous chapters, numerous clubs represent the Palestinian football arena around Beirut camps. In Shatila you can find *Shabab Filistin, Karmel* (the oldest one, established in the Sixties), *Al Mahd, Majd al-Kroum* and the newly established *Ahlam Laji*. In Sabra area there are *Al-Riha, Jenin, Akka*. Moreover, beyond Al-Aqsa and the archrival *Shabab al-ʿAwda*, Bourj el-Barajneh constitutes the core location for Shouada Al-Aqsa and the newly established *Jalil Club*. Moreover, the local club of Mar Elias club represents the homonym camp, where local people train inside the 11-player field located just out of the camp.

Linked to different organizations, political parties or individual investors, such teams constitute the core of the Palestinian football in Beirut. Such as in the case of the rivalry between Al-Aqsa and Shabab al-ʿAwda described in the last chapter, the relations between the several club are pervaded with dynamics of competition, partnership or hostility according to a mix of variables that include the political affiliations and the local belonging to a camp. However, in most cases such competitions are mostly "played" into the pitch, where the several clubs compete in order to be regarded as the most talented in Beirut area. In this sense, these thirteen clubs have constituted the "Al-Lajnat al-Riyadiyya al Filistiniyya fi Beirut" (the Palestinian Beirut Sport Committee), which is responsible for organizing the local Palestinian League.

Represented by one member per each club affiliated with the Committee, the Palestinian league is defined a *Dauri* (tournament) more than a real league (*Daure*) since it is lacking any official recognition at national or international level. The competitions are self-organized by the Sport Committee, which takes it upon itself to do the administrative, sport and logistic aspect throughout the season. Their duties then include recruiting referees, writing down reports and even arranging the reservation of the football fields. Matches are mostly played either in Sahel field or in Qasqas municipal fields, according to the availability of the same spaces. While the former is mostly unoccupied during the weekends, the only 11-player regular pitch available Qasqas field is also utilized as the match-field by some Lebanese clubs based in Beirut.

Predictably, Palestinian matches are mostly relegated in the most uncomfortable timing for matches, such as early Sunday mornings or late evenings. Despite anyone is formally entitled to reserve the field for free at any available time, the negotiations between the Palestinian Committee and Lebanese clubs result to give priority to the official Lebanese Leagues. However, in this case the priority assigned to the Lebanese activity does not imply the exclusion of the Palestinian sector from the scene: Palestinian and Lebanese competitions are played on the same football pitch.

5.7.2 Football fields as exceptional arenas?

Despite the unofficial character of the tournament, the conquest of such a *Dauri* constitutes the main objective for most of the Palestinian clubs in Beirut. During last season, for instance, the Palestinian League culminated with the final match won by *Shabab al-Awda* over Al-Aqsa team in front of hundreds of spectators and supporters from Bourj el-Barajneh. Everybody on the stands and in the pitch agreed on the fact that the quality of the Palestinian teams in the last few years has significantly improved due to some particularly skilled new players. A significant role in this improvement was then played by the players who had recently come to Lebanon from Syria and joined Palestinian teams. Along such an “historical” intra-Palestinian competition, Syrian players currently become the added value.

Such as in the case of Louay, Zaher and Yazan in the case of Al-Aqsa, many other clubs – included the current champions of the League- have resorted to hire the best Syrian talents around Beirut. Because of the ban imposed on foreign players by the official Lebanese leagues, Palestinian clubs turn into an alternative platform where Syria's refugees can find their alternative chance to show the talent. This is due to the fact that the Palestinian Committee does not impose any cap over foreigner players. "Lebanese, Syrian, Colombian and Sudanese players are currently part of our tournament. And – referring to my case- now we also have one Italian! Here passports do not matter, talent does" told me Al-Aqsa president when he officially consigned me the club *"bitaqa*" (membership card)."[184]

The lack of any national cap over the players lets the club management free to chance to recruit the most skilled available players, in spite of their passport. During the last Al-Aqsa matches during the 2016/2017 season, non-Palestinian players on the pitch were even more numerous than the "local" ones. In order to finally win the local league after several years of failed attempts, Al-Aqsa coach has resorted to calling up the most talented players still affiliated with the club.

Among them, a special mentioned should be reserved for the left-wing Maher, who joined the team just for the last matches together with the "Ramadan Tournament" that concludes the football season in Beirut. Such as per the official leagues through the season, the Palestinian Ramadan tournament is regularly played at an inconvenient timing in respect with the regular one. In this specific case, the Palestinian matches start at 6pm, right one hour before the fast breaking.

That was the first time I have met Maher throughout my career with Al-Aqsa. When he finally joined us in the middle of the field just few minutes before the kick-off, I rapidly realize how all the spectators behind the fences indicate him. Even without any kind of warm-up due to time constraints, the coach indicated him as part of the starting eleven on the left-wing sector. Indeed, that was usually my role on the field. Right after before the kick-off Khaled, who was sitting with me on the bench and noticing my disappointment for the coach's decision, told me: "How can you even think to play instead of him! Do you know where Maher played before? Do you really do not recognize him?"

[184] Abed (May 2017, 8). Personal interview, Bourj el-Barajneh camp.

It took me few seconds to focus on his figure and recognized that our teammate "Maher" was Maher Sabra, the left wing first-string at Nejmeh and the Lebanese National Team. But why was a Lebanese football star was playing in a minor league for a Palestinian team such as Al-Aqsa? To me, that occasion was one of the many baffling moments happened while trying to understand the complex entanglements of Palestinian football in Lebanon. After that revelation, I was eager to know about him more than the match itself.

Indeed, I argue that a brief description of Maher's personal and sport biography – retrieved thanks to my teammates' and managers' memories- is by far more meaningful to shed a light on the unexpected potentialities of a research on the overlapping levels of Lebanon's football society. Retrieving the previously mentioned categories of belonging in respect with a club and a refugee camp, Al-Aqsa president defines Maher Sabra as *ibn al-fareeq* (a son of the team). His Lebanese family used to live right on the road that connects Haret Hreik with Bourj el-Barajneh camp, where also numerous Palestinian families have settled especially since the end of the Civil War. Since most of his friends were Palestinian guys from the camp, when he was 15 years old he decided, with the consent of his family, to join Al-Aqsa young time.

When Maher came here, he was among the less talented in the team: the coach at that time even told me that he did not want him! However, since he was a nice and polite guy, we decided to keep him in the team. He used to train with us but for the first year he has never played any official game. Surprisingly, year-by-year he has much upgraded his skills until he became the usual first-string left-wing of the club. During one match he was observed by one of the Nejmeh scouts, since the club was looking for a Lebanese powerful left-wing player. Can you imagine, the best team in the country came to us to ask for a Lebanese player![185]

Beyond keeping on his career with Nejmeh, Maher is currently regularly selected in the Lebanese National Team that qualified for the 2019 Asian Cup in the United Arab Emirates. From the dust of the Palestinian leagues to the international FIFA competitions with the Lebanese national team: in spite of its exceptionality in

[185] Jamal al-Khatib (October 2017, 25). Beirut Qasqas Stadium

terms of sport results, Maher's biography is still indicative of the current relations between the Lebanon's arena and the refugees' football society. In this regards, just in Al-Aqsa team I used to play with Anas, another Lebanese guy who raised with a Palestinian team before being hired by the major Lebanese teams: After the first experience with Al-Aqsa he was called to play with Nejmeh young team and later on was selected by Sagesse Club, a second division club. However, he is still committed with his first team and usually joins Al-Aqsa when the coach calls him up in concomitance with the most important matches of the season.

Both Maher and Anas are considered as "sons of the team", an integral part of the team both by the managers and by the other teammates despite their Lebanese citizenship. In this regards, we should mention how their career was facilitated by the absence of any cap such as the one imposed on Palestinian players. Jamal, Abed and other players who managed to reach the Lebanese top teams unavoidably constitute a source of prestige and respectability for Al-Aqsa team. In this sense, these players constitute a sort of model of inspirations for hundreds of young guys – not merely Palestinian- who wish to join Al-Aqsa in order to emerge in the elite Lebanese football arena.

Moreover, the fact that two Lebanese players have emerged in the elite national football through the intermediation of a Palestinian team is indicative of the relevance of the refugees' football society in the Lebanon's football society. Qasqas and Sahel fields, in this sense, constitute two privileged platforms of negotiations for the Palestinian and the Lebanese football societies. The sharing of the field and the negotiations emerging about the use of the terrain has revealed mutual experiences of confrontations. The sport biographies illustrated before show to which extent the relation between established clubs with different national backgrounds become occasion to foster the club performance for both Palestinian and Lebanese teams.

Despite the institutional cap imposed on refugee players and the absence of relations between the Lebanese federation and the Palestinian clubs, frequent negotiations between clubs still persist at local level. From one side, the "forced" sharing of the same sport facilities at national level facilitates such a flow of communication and negotiations between the clubs. For instance, it is frequent to assist

at friendly matches organized by one Palestinian and one Lebanese team that weekly train on the same football pitch throughout the season.

Most of the Al-Aqsa players who were recruited by major Lebanese teams, in this sense, were chosen in the aftermath of such occasions. In this sense, the fact that most of the Palestinian League matches are played outside the camp facilitates refugee players' visibility out of the mere Palestinian football society. Indeed, the logistic correspondence of the Lebanese and Palestinian football hubs constitutes a unique platform that subverts the logics of the Palestinians' confinement refugees inside the Palestinian camps.

Football pitches turn then into "exceptional arenas" that question the exceptionality itself of the camps and the hierarchical spatialities imposed upon their inhabitants. In this sense, while the institutionalized caps imposed on non-citizens' access to the Lebanon's football society, Palestinian clubs are interpreted by players from different national backgrounds as an entry-point for the elite football. This is why so many Palestinian and even Syrian players have been currently playing for Palestinian teams around the country with the hope to be recruited by the elite Lebanese teams.

In this regards, we have already emphasized how the cultivation of positive and continuative relations between Palestinian and Lebanese clubs mostly depend on informal relations mostly cultivated around the football fields. According to my fieldwork experience, football society members who have been able to "transgress" their own national sphere of belonging play in this regard an unavoidable role. This is for instance the case of the previously mentioned Abou Ammar, who is the responsible of the Syrian Academy in Beirut and at the same time has cultivated fruitful personal and sport relations with Al-Aqsa during the last years. His figure as the "Syrian-Palestinian gatekeeper" has for instance revealed decisive for the arrival to Al-Aqsa of Yazan, Louay, Zaher and many other players from Syria.

Mainly grounded on informal relations that emerge around several football pitches, Lebanon's football society is then made up of players, coaches and managers whose involvement goes far beyond the national arena where they are supposed to be relegated. In this realm, also refugee members constitute a significant role that is not merely identifiable as subordinated to the official one. The complex sport trajectories

experienced by Maher Sabra in order to enter the Lebanese national teams are in this sense quite exemplificative.

Moreover, such negotiations over the transfer of players from one club to another reinforce the relationship between the two societies and constitute a pattern for future collaborations. For instance, the main coach of Al-Aqsa young team has recently been also invited to train one of the Nejmeh club young selections. Beyond the prestige for Al-Aqsa and for the coach himself, such a movement also constitutes a great opportunity for the refugee players trained by the coach. Fouad and Mazen -both Palestinians players- have already called up to train with Nejmeh young team for one month. However, in the case Nejmeh managers appreciate both the players, they will be forced to engage in a mutual confrontation on the pitch for the only available "Palestinian" spot.

5.8 A new national team in diaspora

Despite an extremely vital collaboration among clubs with different national backgrounds, the structural obstacles on the Palestinian participation in the Lebanon's football society have been conditioning refugees' sport perspectives. As mentioned in the previous pages, such dispositions, that today prevent Syrian players from playing in the Lebanese League, still depend on the anti-Palestinian sentiment spread all over the country in the aftermath of the Civil War.

Nowadays, the rehabilitation of the pre-war scenario with numerous Palestinian players involved in Lebanese clubs sounds like an utopia and would constitute at the same time the best refugee players' expectation. Any hope for the emergence of a Palestinian football society in Lebanon had sunk with the disappearance of the Palestinian federation and the local national team. Following the advent of the Palestine National Authority (PNA) in 1994, the Palestine Football Federation was set up, with a membership that included 259 clubs from all over Palestine. In 1998, the Federation obtained membership in FIFA and, accordingly, the Palestinian national team had the right to participate in Asian, Arab, and world championships.[186] However, a Palestinian

[186] George Ghattas, the Palestine Football Federation, This Week in Palestine, June 2008. http://thisweekinpalestine.com/details.php?id=2486&ed=154&edid=154

branch was still nominally present in Lebanon but still stuck since the end of the Civil war.

Once more, it was up to Jamal al-Khatib to take up the work interrupted with the blow of the Lebanese Civil War. He reminds how the phase of reconstruction started just few years ago:

The federation was stuck, Palestinian football was stuck. No financial support meant no perspective for our football. Just seven years ago some old friends invited me for an informal talk and they offered to support the reconstruction of an efficient federation and national team. They told me: "We should bring Palestinian football into the national arena. What do you think if we- under the name and the patronage of Jamal al-Khatib- try to restart it?" At that time, we knew that there were many organizations that wanted to establish their own domain over the federation. But the Palestinian national team should come from the Palestinian society: I did not want any political organization to be directly involved in the federation and the national team. This is why we directly went to the Palestinian Federation and proposed them to reorganize the football society here in Lebanon. We were given support and trust, and at the end we managed to re-establish a Palestinian national team with an active federation behind[187].

In 2015, an official Palestinian Football federation was re-established after the election of nine members of its council. The newly reborn federation was then renamed as "Palestinian football federation- Diaspora Field" since it officially works under the umbrella of the Palestinian Federation base in Ramallah and internationally recognized since 1998. Majdi, who was nominated among the nine Council members and is currently the manager for Beirut area, explains:

We have three branches: Gaza, West Bank and Lebanon. So because inside Palestine they have everything and we do not have anything, we build this team to be added and join the original one. So if we have super players they can see you and can directly take

---

George Ghattas was PFA Vice-president until 2008 and acting president when Ahmad Afifi could not act from Gaza after 2006.

[187] Ibid

him. This is something like a second Palestinian team, and if everybody has the chance will go directly to the first one. So everything they will do in Palestine, we will know it and try to do it here. As you know, We have now the Palestinian League in Lebanon, and that's surprising because we have been living here for decades and now Lebanon can contain two leagues in one country: the Lebanese and the Palestinian league. But no! Our league is directly to the branch in Palestine. The league is directly related to the branch in Ramallah: what happens there will happen here. When they want to play another tournament, they will also make it here.[188]

Within such an attempt to re-establish a proficient Palestinian football society in the country, the newly established Palestinian federation has organized an official national championship since 2015/2016 seasons. Around 50 teams – divided among three divisions- are currently affiliated with the Federation: while the first division is played at national level, the two minors leagues are divided by region. However, according to the Federation perspectives its League will rapidly become the most important competition as well as the showcase of the Palestinian football in the country.

"While *lejna riyadie* in Beirut is just a matter of clubs gathering ("tajammu") to play football, the "Ittihad" (Federation) gives you more doors and perspective since teams play all around Lebanon."[189] However, the regular execution of the League since its debut has been refrained by many intra-faction fights and discussions related both to economic, politic and sport reasons. For instance, since its mandate directly comes from the Palestinian Ministry of Sport in Ramallah, most of teams related to political factions that are adverse to Fatah have been reluctant to join the Palestinian Federation and Leagues.

The absence of the majority of clubs constitutes the main challenge for the new born Federation, that has been working to establish an open discussion with any club that decides to boycott its activity. For instance, Al-Aqsa team joined the Federation just for the 2016/2017 season, but immediately left it the following year after harsh fights related with the designation of an adverse referees during one of the key-matches.

[188] Majdi (October 2017, 25). Beirut Qasqas Stadium
[189] Ibid

Other clubs, in the same way, resigned their participation in protest with the lack of any economic support by the Federation.

The precariousness of the mediation role played by the Federation is explanatory of the clubs' political and social patronages fulfilled mostly by the numerous Palestinian parties and factions located inside the camp. Intra-Palestinian fights contribute to prevent the whole movement from emerging out of the relegation where is currently confined. In order to counterbalance such atomization - and the consequent further marginalization- of the refugees' football in the country, the Palestinian federation has invested significant resources to establish a Palestinian national team in Lebanon. According to the Council members, such a team – that is not officially recognized by any other Federations- is supposed to gather the best players in the country and then constitute the showcase of the Palestinian football in Lebanon. In Majdi's view:

With the Palestinian federation-branch Lebanon we wanted to change our football reputation. We want to tell them: "Palestinian players are very important and better than the one you bring from outside. Here in Lebanon we have Brazilian players, African players, and they bring them here for 100.000$. When we created this federation we started to change this view, because we started to play against the first/second division Lebanese teams. During the last 30 years we could not organize such a thing, but now since Jamal al-Khatib has good reputation with the clubs and since we make it under the umbrella of the Palestinian federation, all the clubs accepted to play against us. So we try to tell them about the Lebanese law that is very bad against the Palestinians: we should have the same right to play like the others! And we just ask the teams to look by their eyes the quality of our team, and when they watch Palestinian players they say: "Oh my God, we really have good Palestinian players and they are better than the ones we bring from outside.[190]

While some of the Palestinian players are among the "chosen ones" hired to play in the Lebanese Leagues, the majority of the national team is composed by young guys who regularly play in local teams based into the refugees camps all around the country. The national team usually trains once per week in Beirut Qasqsas field with one

[190] Ibid

professional coach and under the supervision of Jamal al-Khatib. The official red jersey of the selection is quite indicative of the peculiarity of such a national team: while the front is decorated with the Palestinian Federation logo, on the upper part of the back side you can easily read "Lebanon" in capital letters. Jamal al-Khatib explains:

We cannot call ourselves Palestine because we already have an official national team in Palestine. It is not like our great team in the Seventies: this is just a newly established team that requires some time to reach good performance. However, we are quite satisfied because we have got good results during several matches played against the top Lebanese clubs and selections: Ansar, Nejneh, Shabab al Sahel. Moreover, we have played some tournaments in Tyre, Sarafand and other locations around the country, and we did it under the name of the Palestinian federation. This aspect reinforced our skills and moreover got us more popular around Lebanon. We have been working in order to have a real Palestinian national team inside the Lebanon's football society.[191]

Figure 16 *Training session of the Palestinian National Team*. Qasqas Field, Beirut. 17/11/2017.

The Palestinian National Team- Lebanon Field is quite certainly the only national team around the world that carries along its denomination the name of two distinct States. Such a semantic distinction is quite indicative of the position assumed by

[191] Jamal Al-Khatib (October 2017, 27).

this hybrid example of national team grounded in exile. In this sense, the current *Mountaqhab* differs from the previously mentioned Palestinian national team, whose players were all coming from the exile but at the same time represented Palestine at international level. The positioning of such a national team, in this sense, is much more oriented towards to reconnect with the so-called "host State" rather than the the Palestinian homeland. According to the same founders' words, the current national selection was conceived as an attempt to have the Palestinian players in Lebanon remerged within the Lebanon's football society.

On the same way, most of the selected players interpret their presence in the national team as a showcase for improving their skills and at the same time finding a more rewarding opportunity for the following seasons. This is especially the case of the many players who regularly play in the refugee leagues and currently do not find any available spot inside the Lebanese Teams because of the cap imposed on Palestinian players. In this sense, gatekeeper figures such as Jamal al-Khatib fulfil a fundamental role in bridging the official Lebanon's football society with the "minor" one played by refugees. Therefore, his well-recognized double belonging as "Palestinian hero of the Lebanese Football" is the decisive glue to formalize linkages and agreements between official Lebanese teams and Palestinian clubs.

Beyond the already-mentioned friendly matches against the top Lebanese clubs, we should mention how the Palestinian national team in Lebanon was recently invited to play a friendly match against the Lebanese Olympic Football Team. Despite the absence of any formal recognition between the Lebanese Federation and its Palestinian "counterpart", such an anecdote is quite exemplificative of the transcending potential related to gatekeeper figures such as Al-Khatib. In this way, his in-between decisive position depends on informal negotiations and formal recognitions that mostly occur inside football field.

The "pitch element", in this sense, works as a transcending post-national hub in front of an institutionalized system made up of severe camps imposed on non-national players. In this sense, Al-Khatib's function recalls the role played by many Syrian figures mentioned in the previous pages, acting to establish a connection between the

informal Syrian football society and the Palestinian refugee league. Therefore, while figures such as Abou Ammar, Abou Tareq and Al-Aqsa coach work on a "intra-refugee" dimension, Al-Khatib's figure tries to bring the refugee football world into the official one. The recent (re)establishment of a Palestinian national team, which also includes Palestinian players from Syria, is an attempt to systematize such informal negotiations among the several football societies around the countries.

Throughout my fieldwork I have noticed how, despite not surprising obstacles mostly related to the funding of the players, the Palestinian national team has rapidly imposed in the Lebanon's football society till unexpected levels. Right in April 2018, for instance, the Palestinian national team was invited by the Lebanese Army selection team to play a friendly match. A friendly football match between two archirval enemies such as the representatives of the Lebanese Army and the Palestinians in Lebanon: something I would never expect to happen before undertaking the fieldwork and that will never be mentioned on the local and international media. While informal negotiations among the several national football societies have been working for more than one decade, the Palestinian national team-branch Lebanon is still a new-born "laboratory" whose functioning should be evaluated along the following years.

Summary

According to Raab (2012), while the literature on Middle Eastern football is rewarding on its own right, it is also a gateway for learning about the societies where it has developed and where it is passionately played and loved. While most research analyses football in Lebanon exclusively as a tool for learning about other aspects of the society, I have tried to prioritize the daily "pitch element" within the analysis of the Lebanon's football society. Namely, I mean practices, discourses and sport results performed thousands of players, supporters, managers and many other figures directly involved in Lebanon's football world. The "pitch element" contributes to emphasise the complexity of sharing multiple individual and collective identities: the stadium becomes exemplificative of the many other spaces- such as a border or an urban checkpoint- where a person shifts its positioning and affiliation in view of a specific objective.

Relating my fieldwork with oral memories, visual materials and news recollected on media agencies based inside the Palestinian camps, I initially tracked down the history of refugees' sport avenue in Lebanon. A detailed ethnography of the sport and human trajectory experienced by Jamal al-Khatib - "The Palestinian Legend of the Lebanese Football"- allowed us to better investigate how, in the face immobility and lack of valid documents, sport allows acquiring and playing your identity through strategies that ground on multiple belonging and affiliations with a football team and a broader football community. Also due to its socio-economic marginality in the country, refugees and non-nationals have been included in the construction of Lebanon's football society whose they have historically constituted an unavoidable role.

Palestinians have played a meaningful part in the construction of Lebanon's football society until the imposition of caps on the numbers of foreign players in the league, that were introduced in the Nineties in line with the institutionalized social marginalization of refugees adopted in the country since the end of the Civil War. Nowadays, Palestinian football players born and raised in Lebanon are discriminated in the opportunity to reach the main spots of the national football along a general framework of socio-economic marginalizations imposed on refugees: the chance for a

Palestinian player to emerge out of the "anonymity" of the minor and Palestinian leagues are reduced to just a bunch of spots out of thousands of candidates

Starting from 2011, such dynamics of exclusions have also affected the sport career of many football recently resettled from Syria. As national membership still constitutes an unavoidable obstacle for the foreigners, refugee-refugee relations allow many players to transcend such restrictions: the Palestinian sport arena has revealed as a fundamental resource for many refugee players far beyond the mere leisure socio-spatial dimension. The logistic correspondence of Lebanese, Palestinian and Syrian football hubs constitutes a unique platform that questions the logics of the refugees' confinement refugees inside refugee camps. In particular, with the recreation of "parallel" unofficial refugees' league, Palestinian clubs turn into an alternative platform where football players from Syria can find a chance to emerge. Football pitches turn into symbolical "exceptional arenas" that question the exceptionality itself of the camps in the face of the progressive narrowing of the refugees' socio-spatial visibility in the country.

Figure 17: *The Palestinian National Team- Branch Lebanon.* (Source: The Palestinian Federation Facebook page).

Relevant literature

Al-Masri, M. (2016). *Political Theatre: Football and Contestation in Beirut*. Doctoral thesis, Goldsmiths, University of London.

Amara, M. (2014). "Sport and Political Leaders in the Arab World". *Histoire-Politique. Politique, culture, société* 23 (2): 142-153.

Amstrong, G., Giulianotti, G. Richard (eds.) (1997). *Entering the Field: New Perspectives on World Football*. Oxford: Berg.

Appadurai, A. (1995). "Playing with Modernity: The Decolonization of Indian Cricket". In *Consuming Modernity: Public Culture in a South Asian World*, edited by C.A. Breckenridge, 23-48. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press.

Bayat, A. (2010) *Life as Politics, How Ordinary People Change the Middle East*. Stanford, Ca., Stanford University Press, 2010.

Bourdieu, P. (1978). "Sport and Social Class". *Social Science Information* 17: 819-840.

Cleland, J., Doidge, M,, Millward, P. and Widdop, P. (2018). *Collective Action and Football Fandom: A Relational Sociological Approach*. Basingstoke: Palgrave MacMillan,

Dorsey, J. (2016). *The Turbulent World of Middle East Soccer*. London: Hurst & Co.

Khalidi, I. (2013). *One Hundred Years of Football in Palestine*. Dar Al-shorouk.

MacClancy, J. (1996), *Sport, Identity and Ethnicity*. Oxford, Berg.

Mouawad, J. (2018): "Lebanese Football: Imagining a Defiant and United Lebanon?", *Middle East Critique* 14 (1): 289-302.

Raab, A. (2012). "Soccer in the Middle East: an introduction". *Soccer & Society* 13 (5-6): 619-638.

Raab, A. Khalidi, I. (2016). Soccer in the Middle East. London, New York: Routledge.

Reiche, D. (2011). "War Minus the Shooting? The Politics of Sport in Lebanon as a Unique Case in Comparative Politics". *Third World Quarterly* 32(2): 261–277.

Rommel, K. (2014) "A veritable game of the nation: on the changing status of football within the Egyptian national formation in the wake of the 2009 World Cup qualifiers against Algeria". *Critical African Studies* 6 (2–3): 157–175.

Conclusions

At the beginning of October 2017, following almost two months of absence from the field, I went back to Lebanon in order to conclude the last part of my doctoral fieldwork. Differently from the usual disorientation following my return inside the camp, rejoining the everydayness of my football team dynamics after such a long period resulted to be less traumatic than expected, since the football season - started just few weeks before- was already at its core moment. The following weekend, in fact, Al-Aqsa would have played the semi-final match of the *Kas Abou Ammar* (Yasser Arafat Cup), one of the most important competitions organized by the newly reborn Palestinian Football Federation- Lebanon Field. My teammates had earned the chance to compete for the national semi-final after winning the local Beirut Cup along a 4-team competition that also included *Shabab Filistin, Al-Karmel Team and Shabab al-Awda*, our historical competitors in Bourj el-Barajneh camp.

As Beirut champions, we were entitled to face the winner of the local competition among the teams based around Tripoli area. However, that regional tournament scheduled among teams from Nahr el-Bared and Beddawi camps had never realized due to the boycott staged by the majority of the involved clubs as a form of protest against the Palestinian Federation, accused of reducing the financial support for the most prestigious clubs that were forced to weekly move all over the national territory. Therefore, Al-Aqsa would have faced the only formation that abstained from the boycott campaign: "Shabiba Beddawi", that coincided with the less skilled club among the ten formations based in Tripoli area.

Quite surprisingly, during the summer break four of my teammates had left the club in order to join rival teams while two had got married and decided to stop playing football, at least for that part of the season. On the contrary, Al-Aqsa had managed to "catch" four new players scouted among the Syrian informal teams that usually train inside Hamas football field. Moreover, I was delighted to know that Louay had decided rejoin Al-Aqsa team after a troubled month spent between a detention room inside Istanbul airport and the consequent deportation towards the Syrian border. Few days after being smuggled back to Lebanon, he had scored the two decisive goals for Al-

Aqsa success in the Beirut Cup that allowed us to play the national semi-final match in Tripoli.

The night before the match, I invited Louay to my place in order to share with him our recent experiences. Two months before, we had greeted with the perspective of meeting soon again in Italy, where he was supposed to land after a perilous route passing by Istanbul, Tripoli and finally the Mediterranean Sea crossing. Instead, our meeting place occurred to be Beirut, in the same location where we had said goodbye in August. After managing to be smuggled back to Lebanon again, he revealed me how his legal situation in the country was even more precarious than before leaving the country:

It is a messy period right now, indeed! According to the law, I would not be allowed to stay here in Lebanon because I entered the country illegally. While before my residency permit was expired as many other people from Syria, now I just have an exit Lebanese visa printed on my passport. Meanwhile, I also lost 2,000 dollars. What should I do? I have just gone back to my previous life and restarted the same job with my brother. However, I feel even worse and more in danger than before: you cannot ever know what expects you once you are stopped on the road[1].

Despite the troubles and dangers related to his own legal position in the country, Louay did not show any kind of hesitancy when Al-Aqsa managers announced that the semi-final match would have been played in Beddawi camp, on the northern extremity of the country. He is one of the best players within the squad and he cannot miss such a crucial appointment for the team, even if it implied crossing Lebanon from its capital to the north. Everybody was aware of the fact that the 80 kilometres on the coastal highway between Beirut and Tripoli were punctuated with three fixed checkpoints managed by the Lebanese Army. In Foucaldian terms, the deployment of these measures reinforces and materializes in the space "a technology of power entailing the management of space and movement for peoples out of place" (Malkki, 1996: 444). Among the Al-Aqsa players and managers, such a obstacle was supposed to be

[1] Louay (October 7, 2017). Personal interview, Beirut.

particularly detrimental for the Syrian and Palestinian from Syria members, who were all deprived of any valid documents in Lebanon.

Such as the great majority of Syrian refugees settled in Lebanon since 2011, most of my Syrian teammates do not feel confortable with moving around the Lebanese territory: their precarious legal status in Lebanon conditions their daily mobility and has emerged as a relevant variable asymmetric relation between the individual and the national institutions. The perceived "high level of threat" posed by camp dwellers is identified according to both broad and localized notions of social hierarchy and identification that ranked and sorted persons by making use of various sensorial registers including the visual discernment, verbal communication, and mental determination of characteristics such as class, gender, age, and religious and national background (Monroe, 2016).

My work showed to which extent Lebanese authorities institutionalized a "socio-political hierarchization" between the two refugee national communities in the country. While Palestinian refugees in the Lebanese narrative embody the figure of "ideal refugees", the legal definition of Syrian nationals as "displaced people" currently relegates 80% of Syrian refugees in the country within a spiral of "un-refugization" and institutionalized illegalization. Such an institutional dichotomy polarizes the geographical trajectories of the two exiles while "equally" confining most Palestinian and Syrian refugees within precarious and marginalized socio-economical spheres.

Throughout my fieldwork around several localities in Lebanon, I observed how such dynamics of strategic and reciprocal invisibilities performed by Syrian refugees particularly materialize around the military checkpoints scattered all over the country. Coherently with the securitization tendency all over Lebanon, the physical presence of this dispositive results particularly evident inside areas that are considered by the national authorities as particularly sensible. In particular, my work underlined how Lebanese institutions have progressively intensified its illegal restrictions on the right of freedom of movement for Palestinian and Syrian refugees living in Lebanon's twelve camps and tens of gatherings. Moving in particular from the progressive curtails over

the camps' entrances and exits inside Nahr el-Bared camp, my work analysed to which extent the control of the entrance of refugee camps plays an important role in the reduction of Syrian refugees' freedom of movement and perception of safety.

The work has investigated the progressive relegation of the newcomers into the " obscure field of illegality" and to which extent concrete risks of detention further complicates the newcomers' mobility in and out the Palestinian camps. In this sense, the work has given leeway to formulate a notion of how performances of space excel in time and space through practices of control and regulations and *de facto* make borders pervasive for Syria's refugees. As most of them are constantly forced to reshape their own mobility patterns according to any specific location crossed even right around the same city, I supposed that the 80 kilometres between Beirut and Tripoli would have prevented them from joining the match

During the night before the match in Tripoli, Tareq, the Syrian youngest player among the squad, sent me a vocal message to announce his absence from the match. "I will not come tomorrow and stay inside the camp because I do not have documents" (Ma maʿ i waraqi). His stance seemed to remark how legal residency results as a relevant variable in the Syrian refugees' daily life all over Lebanon on many dimensions such as mobility and access to services and make them adopting a strategy of what I tried to explicate as "self-censorship". While working as "spaces of refugee" within its perimeter in respect with the intrusion of the Lebanese authorities, the ethnography has showed how Palestinian camps reveal the other side of the coins in respect with the outside environment turning into "frozen camps".

The "historical" spatial relegation imposed on Palestinian camps by Lebanese authorities turn into a tactics of survival in respect with the increasing securitization trajectories adopted in the governance of Palestinian camps. Officially implemented with the target of preventing and repressing the proliferation of criminal activities between the camps and outside, checkpoints actually constitute a heavy physical and mental burden especially in respect with people living in the camp without valid legal documents. Palestinian camps- as "extraterritorial spaces" out of the Lebanese legislation and interference - have been continuously performing their primary role of "spaces of refuge" for thousands of undocumented migrants. After the latest arrival of

numerous Syrian and Palestinians of Syria finding refuge in the camps, the social function of "protection" for people without legal documents has extended to most of the Syria's refugees.

With checkpoints materializing the geographical and psychological boundary between an inside "safe place" that risks being frozen from the outside, the newly displaced refugees find themselves forced to reshape their own mobility patterns according to any specific crossed location. Through an in depth analyses of the camp as an urban ethnographic case, my work confirmed how a refugee camp is both a place of segregation implemented by the political authorities, and a place socially constructed by the relationships and interactions between the refugees and other subjects (Fontanari, 2017). Unlike the majority of scholarship that tends to portray refugee camps univocally as separate exceptional spaces (Agamben, 1995) and sources of marginalization, my research sustains how the exception as an analytical category may also be regarded as a resource through which camp residents negotiate their social and spatial presence in Lebanon.

With the arrival of numerous newly displaced people from Syria in precarious socio-economic conditions, I observed how the interactions between Palestinians and Syrians reshape new geographies and patterns of mobility beyond the refugee camp. While sharing and reinterpreting the restricted spaces of the camp, the social relations with the "other refugees" particularly intertwine with the daily practices of mobility and denote the power of such border transgression in daily life (Van Houtum & Van Naerssen, 2001). Deprived of any kind of general rules and decoding patterns, the relations between refugees and local institutions in power at the edge of the camp are usually "played" at. Such features of reciprocal visibility, asymmetrical power and collective representation are not the only factors that determine the logics behind the extension of refugees' spatiality: informality revealed as another fundamental resource able to reshape the collective trajectories.

While literature conceives Palestinian camps as spaces mainly socially organized through national and political relations, my fieldwork has shed light on alternative dimensions as free time activities local pinpointed in a spatial perspective. Throughout my research, I observed how such a spatial space discipline imposed on the

base of the legal status deeply impact refugees' daily life even while performing their leisure time. In this sense, if ethnography allows us to shed light on the structural dynamics that produce exclusion, vulnerability and marginality, it also has the potential to show how margins are experienced in unexpected and creative ways (Pinelli, 2017). Moving from the historical of the camp through its most troubled periods, we can trace to which extent the geographical margins of the camp assume a functional meaning in terms of regulating and separating an "inside" related to the contracted spaces of the camps from an "outside" that extends towards the city.

Overcoming an abstract category of spatiality that seems discrete and self-explanatory between "the space of the camp" and "the space of the city", these practices assume what I dare to define as a collective "trangressive" dimension. In this sense, their imaginative and practical work of transgressing the hierarchical spatialities imposed by the local authorities is neither purely emancipatory not entirely disciplined but is a space of contestation (Appadurai, 1996). Many situations faced during my fieldwork showed the power networks in which refugees move, act and carry out their practices reveal the forms of subjection these subjects face as well as their "condition of possibility" (Butler, 1997).

While initially intended as mere moments of fun, the daily participation in the sporting event of Al-Aqsa team have rapidly revealed as crucial throughout my fieldwork: the dimension of leisure and play has revealed the most relevant to examine daily practices of spatial appropriation performed by Syria's refugees settled inside Bourj el-Barajneh camp. The football fields around Beirut southern suburbs turn into arenas where social space has the potential to be dynamically reinterpreted and to reconfigure the urban geographies far beyond the leisure time. In particular, the daily trips from the camp to the Sahel football stadium with my teammates were particularly relevant for investigating practices of mobility in the context of permanent strong securitization policies around al-Dahiye.

By hinging the ethnography on Bourj el-Barajneh camp, my research focused on how Palestinian and Syrian refugees reshape the daily socio-spatial practices in respect with the spatial hierachization of bodies imposed around the camps. Observing in depth how in particular my teammates with different legal and national backgrounds reshape

the boundaries between the camp and its margins, I argue that the informal refugee-refugee relations inside the camp contribute to extend the mental space of the camp beyond their socio-spatial hierarchization. My fieldwork revealed particularly explicative to show how refugee-refugee relations contribute to transgress the time/space of governamentality imposed by outside and to delineate configurations of safe spaces where they can recreate feelings of safety and familiarity. Football revealed an opportunity to investigate the right to participate, the right to appropriate, the right to complete usage of moments and places even inside a refugee camp.

Throughout my research, I observed how the control of spaces imposed by the authorities on the base of the legal status deeply impact refugees' daily life, but also indirectly and directly provoke new modalities of reshaping the space through original connections. Play and playfulness in the public realm turned to be an original form of knowledge about the spaces where the practice occurs through imaginative, often spontaneous actions linked to everyday encounters very useful perspective, different in logic from current modes of consultation and participation regarding the production of public space. Several episodes throughout my first months within the team has suggested to which extent thinking through the city from the lens of "play" provides us with a new way of seeing its spaces. In this sense, the active participation as a player within Al-Aqsa team revealed decisive: the football team has gradually unveiled as a peculiar microcosm of the daily interactions between different temporalities of exiles that gathered inside a refugee camp.

Recollecting the players' biographies and monitoring their daily trajectories helped me to enlighten how camp dwellers expand the physical and mental space of the camp far beyond the official boundaries of the camp and the spatial marginalization imposed by both State and non-State actors. My fieldwork, which implied observing people's movements while simultaneously conducting ethnographic research and playing within the team, showed how refugees creatively impose their own imprint on the space and meaning of the camps in ways which if not oppositional to the apparatus of control, at least served as obstacles to its full realization. (Peteet, 2005). In this sense, the spatialization imposed on refugees'

mobility is continuously contrasted by encroachment practices, which do not limit the refugees to avoid border-space but permit them to constantly modify and re-invent such "in-between" spaces. In particular, the research lingered on how the affiliation with a well-established and "respectable" football team contributes to foster the newcomers' mobility outside the camp.

Unsurprisingly, once we gathered for taking the private bus to Tripoli, no one was absent: all the players, supporters and managers had resorted to join the team for that decisive match in Beddawi. When I saw Tareq already seated along the first bus seats he told me: "The managers and also my friends assured me that there is no risk as far as I come in the bus together with the team". On the way to Beddawi camp, despite the scenography of the route along the Lebanese northern coastal side, no one seems to take care of the world outside the bus if not in occasions of the checkpoints.

The two-hour route from Bourj el-Barajneh to Tripoli pass without any inconvenience: our bus filled with young male guys dressed with the official tracksuit of a football team is not even stopped at the two main checkpoints at the entrance of the cities of Batroun and Tripoli. Most of the players listen to some music through their headphones, some others sleep and very few of us try to guess the probable line-up selected by the coach for the semi-final and the quality of our opponent team. The two teams, in fact, had never played against before.

Moreover, just one out of twenty players had previously visited Beddawi camp in occasion of another football match played against another team from that camp. Even the team managers do not clearly have any expertise related with the camp: once we cross Tripoli and get close to Jabal al-Beddawi area, it is up to the driver to ask road indications to the passers-by. Just after the bus crosses without any impediment the checkpoint between the main road and the camp entrance, most of us unfold the curtains and open the window in order to look around another camp. Most of the comments immediately resort to compare Beddawi with their own camp: "Here streets are larger and we can cross the camp by bus. Can you imagine cross our camp by bus? We would eradicate the electricity wires in few seconds[2]".

However, the natural curiosity for another camp landscape significantly different

[2] Ehab (October 15, 2017). Talk on the Al-Aqsa bus, Beddawi camp.

from Bourj el-Barajneh is not projected on its populace: indeed, any kind of interaction with the new context immediately stops once we enter the football stadium. If not for a formal initial greeting by the *Shabiba Beddawi* manager, I am quite surprised by the lack of any formal recognition among the respective players and supporters. Despite the match is organized by the official Palestinian federation in order to commemorate a national symbol such as the former president Arafat, the "pitch element" does not reveals any kind of commitments between national fellows from two different camps who had never met before. No national anthem, no official gift exchange but just a formal collective salute before the match: nothing different from any other football match around the world. Rather, among my teammates the competition spirit seems to emphasize a feeling of otherness more than any kind of national commitment and recognition. Referring to the different accent spoken by our opponents, Ghassan says: "I can barely understand what they say: their dialect is so close to Syrian[3]."

Such a lack of recognition among Palestinian refugees in Lebanon does not fit into the ideological and nationalistic prims mostly carried out by the research on the topic, where Palestinian refugees are uncritically considered as national subjects without forms of social and political organization and identification developed in exile (Allan, 2014). The active participation within the everyday dynamic of a football team turned into the pragmatic anti-reductionist alternative to a narrative around refugee camps solely structured around nationalistic claims and humanitarian narratives. I tried to show how a critical approach toward certain post-humanitarian and nationalist accounts of the Palestinian experience in exile, aimed at analytically de-exceptionalizing the narrative about Palestinian camps in Lebanon through the subjective perspective of people inhabiting them on a daily basis, could generate a more nuanced understanding of the refugees' everyday life.

The activities performed during leisure time often overlapped with the other daily life dimensions, recreating a feeling of "familiar safeness" and providing resources going far beyond mere leisure spatio-temporalities. Within the current co-presence of "overlapping displacements" (Fiddian-Qasmiyeh, 2012), the interactions between Palestinians and Syrians on the Lebanese territory materialize through new

[3] Ghassan (October 15, 2017). Bourj el-Barajneh camp.

configurations and labelling of Palestinian refugee camps in Lebanon. In this sense, the research shed a light on how dwellers in Bourj el-Barajneh reorganize not just space, but also timing, functionality and mutual understanding in the aftermath of the establishment of Syria's refugees inside the camp.

Throughout the fieldwork inside the camp, that football field was experienced as an alternative gathering spaces where people regularly can meet and recreate a sort of familiarity with that space even for hundreds of non-camp dwellers. A refugee camp has materialized into a space for play and leisure time even for non-camp dwellers who expressly commute to Bourj el-Barajneh camp for playing football inside the Hamas Field. Through ludic activities such as football, I analysed how "new" and "old" refugees experiment peculiar feelings of familiarity belonging in respect with a "magnetic and repellent space" (Fiddian-Qasmiyeh & Qasmiyeh, 2013) such as a refugee camp. Throughout my everyday presence in the Hamas Football Field I have glimpsed to which extent Palestinian, Syrian and Lebanese players and supporters renegotiate presence, space and timing inside a football field clearly demarcated with a political faction inside the camp. In this regards, the active participation inside the "Al-Aqsa laboratory" revealed to be crucial throughout my fieldwork in the camp far beyond perimeter of the football field.

Play initiates both negotiation and conflict, thus making the dynamics of the playing incredibly valuable, as they reveal the way in which the players (the community individuals or groups) relate to one another, their hierarchies, power struggles and frustrations or preferences (Charif & Hafeda, 2017). While the majority of the Palestinian teams are affiliated with the local Palestinian factions and reclaim their attachment with homeland within their denomination, all of them present inside their rooster an important number of players recently came from Syria. Throughout my participation within the team I observed in depth the everyday logics of exclusion/ inclusion and the reformulation of alliances among players from several national, political and class backgrounds.

Especially since Al-Aqsa team- that was established in the Eighties by Palestinians born in Lebanon- resorted to hire the best Syrian talents around Beirut, the

dynamics evolving around the team have shed a further light on the social reformulation occurring inside a network composed by Palestinian, Syrian and Lebanese members. I have focused on how the "foreign element" -namely the Syrian players who are supposed to be mostly out of the intra-factional dynamics of competition and control- shape their presence inside a Palestinian team and how such a relationship extends to the other dimensions of their daily life. Looking at why and to which extent Syrian, Lebanese and even Palestinians from Syria decide to play for al-Aqsa reveals new meanings related to the foreigners' positionality both in the club and in the camp.

Opening up the analysis to the modalities of engagement between Al-Aqsa and the "official" football system, the ethnography of the Lebanon's football society has provided a liminal social arena that questions most of the literature about sport in Lebanon and even the popular belief in the country, which presents clubs as internally unified communities with well-defined political identities. In this sense, the complexity of the entanglement of sports and politics and the negotiations over how they are defined show broader networks beyond the conventional national, political and religious allegiances. Football offers a space for the formation, manifestation or 'spectacularisation' of social, spatial, and political identities, especially oppositional ones. As Sorek (2007) argues, football also reveals as an outstanding sphere for practicing both separation and substitution spheres: the construction of local pride around the football team works in opposition with another Palestinian team based in the same camp.

Confirming Jensen's conclusions (2013) about the Hamas-Affiliated *Jam'iyya club* in Gaza, my ethnography showed how a number of non-religious, ideological and political factors contributed to the players' commitment with Al-Aqsa Team. Namely, the sport-related motives deeply intertwine with more personal reasons that cannot be encapsulated into the nationalist perspective about Palestinian refugees and its inhabitants. Combining an historical presence inside the camp with the contested affiliation with Hamas, an ethnographic picture of Al-Aqsa Team revealed unexpected daily "alliance of bodies" shared by its players. Through multiple personal, national and sport feelings of belonging exemplified throughout the chapter, the affiliation with a

well-established and “respectable” football team contributes to foster the Syrian refugees’ individual presence and recognition inside the camp and extends to other social dimension. “When I walk around the camp wearing Al-Aqsa tracksuit, I feel one of the camp” told me Tareq while we were moving to the Hamas football pitch for a night training. Such ”recognition” within a collective grounded in the social community contributes to reformulate Palestinian camps into spaces of belonging even in the case of the newly camp dwellers.

By discussing how the nexus between being a “son of the camp” and a “son of the team” reformulates with the recent arrival of new members from Syria, my work showed to which extent distinct spatio-temporalities of exile in Bourj el-Barajneh camp renegotiate feelings of local belonging, questioning the binary distinction between a “home” and a “refugee camp”. The work showed how in the case of Syria’s refugees assumed as newly “sons of the camp”, such recognition constitutes an effective resource through daily life concerns fay beyond the camp’s geographical extension. However, these resources constitute a consequence rather than the cause for choosing a specific football team such as Al-Aqsa: it is the everydayness of participation inside a team that generates informal collective practices and congeniality among its members. More than factional policy and national membership, my work showed how the competition between the teams is mainly played along two dynamics: the moral reputation and the sport results.

As per the former, with the only football field directly conceived and managed by members affiliated with a conservative political party, I argue that in such a landscape loitering is not perceived as antithetical to a shared moral register (Achilli, 2015: 173). As per the latter, in the aftermath of the ban imposed on foreign players by the official Lebanese leagues, Palestinian clubs turn into an alternative space where Syria’s refugees can find an alternative chance to show their talent. In this sense, while the institutionalized caps imposed on non-citizens’ access to the Lebanon’s football society, Palestinian clubs are lived by players from different national backgrounds as an entry-point for the elite football. Many Palestinian and even Syrian players have been currently playing for Palestinian teams around the country with the perspective to be

recruited by the elite Lebanese teams through informal negotiations and formal recognitions that mostly occur inside football field.

Chapters Four and Five delineated how refugees and non-nationals have constituted an unavoidable role in the construction of Lebanon's football society. Mainly grounded on informal relations that emerge around several football pitches, Lebanon's football society is made up of players, coaches and managers whose involvement goes far beyond the national arena where they are supposed to be relegated. During the last years, without any attempt to establish a "parallel system" in strongly opposition with the official one, the Palestinian football arena can be rather conceived as a platform for inscribing refugee players into the Lebanese Football Society despite their national membership. Along such an "historical" intra-Palestinian competition, the players who recently joined the camp from Syria currently become the added value on the pitch.

My fieldwork has regarded Lebanon's football society as a social arena in which ethnic, national and religious identities are constantly "played out" and negotiated starting from the football field itself. In this sense, the ethnography of Al-Aqsa team points out on how the sport success obtained on the pitch partially contribute to question the socio-spatial hierarchizations imposed on refugee camps and dwellers. Inside a refugee camps as well as in any other sport arena around the world, the score cannot be reduced to a detail, but rather becomes both the tool and the key for fostering new feelings of belonging and familiarity among newly and historical refugees. The "pitch element", in this sense, works as a transcending post-national hub in front of an institutionalized system made up of severe caps imposed on non-national players.

The semi-final match against Beddawi camp was a real success: Al-Aqsa Team defeated the opponents 7-1 benefiting from a hat-trick scored by Louay. For the first time in its history, the club had qualified for the Arafat Cup national: this success was also due to the contribution by players who had never in common with a Palestinian competition before leaving Syria and finding out in a Palestinian camp in Lebanon. All the players, supporters and managers were in a festive mood and we decided to stop along our way in Tripoli Al-Mina coastal town for celebrating such a success in a chilly café right by the sea. Most of my teammates had never been to Al-Mina before: football

is also a chance to extend the mental geography out of a refugee camp. The atmosphere around our table is really thrilling after the success: players and managers sit and have dinner together looking forwards to play the final scheduled for the next weekend. Tarek, while enjoying the breezy atmosphere of sunset time while watching the fishermen mending their nets on the quay, tells me: "It is really great here. We should bring this place to the camp[4]".

The next Sunday, Al-Aqsa team lost the final match at the penalty game against the most prestigious team from Ein el-Hilweh camp. After the match played in Saida, no one wanted to talk on the bus. Once we get Bourj el-Barajneh, we directly go back to our homes in the camp. Moreover, I also feel really embittered since the most important match of Al-Aqsa history has coincided with my last one with the squad: few days later I would have left Lebanon and the team in order to go back to Italy. During the farewell party organized by the club right the day after the final, the team managers had also invited some political and religious figures from the club. The atmosphere inside the team headquarter was still certainly conditioned by the unlucky match played the day before. This is why Sheikh Mohammed, the same person who introduced my work in the first page, took the floor to address all the players:

We are really proud of your success in the cup: you gave light to the whole Bourj el-Barajneh camp. It does not matter the final score of the final: everybody who was present in Saida saw on the field the best expression of our camp. I want to congratulate personally with all of you, from the goalkeeper to the striker up to the president. Some of you were not born in Bourj el-Barajneh camp and then were not used to breathing the camp's atmosphere. However, from the stands no one could distinct you from the Palestinian guys in the squad. You are all sons of the team, you are all sons of the camp[5].

This final remark summarizes to which extent a football team inside a refugee camp materializes as an "alliance of bodies" where - far from any attempt to romanticize the game as a "panacea" for social tensions- the distinct national, social,

[4] Tarek (October 2017, 15). Extract from a public discussion, Tripoli
[5] Sheikh Mohamed (June 2017, 12). Public discourse held inside the Al-Aqsa Team headquarters.

cultural and political differences are “played out” on the field. As Palestinian refugee camps go through a period of radical transformation in the arrival and resettlement of refugees from Syria, the thesis invites exploration into the multiplicity of refugee-refugee relations (Fiddian-Qasmiyeh, 2016) in a longer temporal perspective. How will the protracted co-existence of Palestinian and Syrian refugees inside restricting spaces impact their mutual perceptions and how it will condition the social tensions inside a refugee camp? While being beyond the scope of the research for this work, the analysis of the transnational social connections emerging between the camp dwellers and the numerous Palestinian and Syrian diaspora communities “originally” moved from such camps could enrich our understanding of the transformations of spaces and roles emerging in such a local but multi-connected landscape.

Finally, I want once more to emphasise that this work is not a study of Palestinian and Syrian refugees in Lebanon at large, but rather of a specific group within a specific camp: the field trajectory let me adopt a privileged focus on young men and adolescents of Bourj el-Barajneh camp revolving around the Hamas football field. While the final chapter tries to zoom the ethnography out of the peculiar socio-spatial context, the complexity of the entanglement of sports, mobility and social reformulations in Lebanon merits further exploration, benefiting from the collaboration with a growing body of literature focusing on the issue (Al-Masri, 2016, Mouawad, 2018) and in continuity with this research.

Figure 18: *Infographic for the "Yasser Arafat Cup" Final. Al-Aqsa Beirut* versus *Al-Nahda Ein el-Hilweh.* 12 November 2017, Sibline. (Source: Palestinian Football Federation-Branch Lebanon Facebook Page

References

Abou Khalil, J. (1991). *Lubnān wa Suriyyah: Mashakkat al-'Ukhuwwah* [Lebanon and Syria: The trouble of brotherhood]. Beirut: Sharikat al-Matbū'āt lil Tauzī' wal-Nasher.

Aboultaif, E.W. (2016). "The Evolution of the Lebanese and Syrian State-to-State Relations". *Contemporary Review of the Middle East* 3(2): 162-178.

Abourahme, N. (2014). "Assembling and Spilling-over: Towards an 'Ethnography of Cement'. *International Journal of Urban and Regional Research* 39(2): 200–217.

Abu- Lughoud, L. (1991). "Writing against Culture". In *Recapturing Anthropology: Working in the Present,* edited by R.G. Fox, 173-162. Santa Fe, N.M.: School of American Research Press.

Abreek-Zubiedat, F. (2015). "The Palestinian refugee camps: the promise of 'ruin' and 'loss' ". *Rethinking History* 19 (1), 72-94.

Achilli, Luigi (2015), *Palestinian Refugees and Identity: Nationalism, Politics and the Everyday.* London, New York: I.B. Tauris.

Agamben, G. (2003). *Stato di eccezione*. Torino: Bollati Boringhieri.

Agamben, G. (1998). *Homo Sacer: Sovereign Power and Bare Life*. Stanford: Stanford University Press.

Agier, M. (2002) *Aux bords du monde, les réfugiés*. Paris: Flammarion.

Ahmed, N. (2012). *Understanding the Nakba: An insight into the plight of Palestinians*. London: Palestinian Return Centre, 2012.

Akram, S. M. and Al-Azza, N. (2015). *Closing Protection Gaps: Handbook on Protection of Palestinian Refugees in States Signatories to the 1951 Refugee Convention*. Betlehem: Badil Resource Center for Palestinian Residency and Refugee Rights.

Al-Hardan, A. (2012). "The Right of Return Movement in Syria: Building a Culture of Return, Mobilizing Memories for the Return." *Journal of Palestine Studies*, Vol.41, n°2: 62–79.

Al Mawed, S.H. (1999). *The Palestinian Refugees in Syria: Their Past, Present and Future*. International Development Research Centre.

Al Nassir, S. (2016). "Refugee Camps as a Spatial Phenomenon of Self-Organization". Brief for Dresden Leibniz Graduate School.

https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/content/documents/973133_Nassir_Refugee%20Camps%20as%20a%20Spatial%20Phenomenon%20of%20Self-Organization.pdf

Al-Masri, M. (2016). *Political Theatre: Football and Contestation in Beirut*. Doctoral thesis, Goldsmiths, University of London.

Al-Sudeary, M. (2012). "Whose Frontiers are They Anyway?". International Proceedings of Economics Development and Research 58: 45-50.

Ali Nayel, M. (2017). "Ain al-Hilweh Camp: The physical and administrative walls surrounding Palestinian refugees in Lebanon". *The Funambolist: Politics of Space and Bodies* 12: 38-43.

Allan, Diana K. (2014). *Refugees of the revolution: Experiences of Palestinian exile.* Stanford studies in Middle Eastern and Islamic societies and cultures. Stanford: Stanford University Press.

Amara, M. (2014). "Sport and Political Leaders in the Arab World". *Histoire-Politique. Politique, culture, société* 23 (2): 142-153.

Amstrong, G., Giulianotti, G. Richard (eds.) (1997). *Entering the Field: New Perspectives on World Football*. Oxford: Berg.

Appadurai, A. (1996). *Modernity at Large: Cultural Dimensions of Globalization*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press.

Appadurai, A. (1995). "Playing with Modernity: The Decolonization of Indian Cricket". In *Consuming Modernity: Public Culture in a South Asian World*, edited by C.A. Breckenridge, 23-48. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press.

Appadurai, A. (1986). "Theory in anthropology. Center and periphery". *Comperative Studies in History* 28 (2): 356-374.

Augè. M. (1995). *Non-places*. London: Verso.

Balibar, E. (1990). "The nation form: history and ideology". *Review, Fernand Braudel Center* 13 (3): 329-361.

Batwawi, S. (2017). "Palestinians and the Syrian War: Between Neutrality and Dissent". Al-Shababka, January 29, 2017. https://al-Shababka.org/briefs/palestinians-syrian-war-neutrality-dissent/

Bayat, A. (2010) *Life as Politics, How Ordinary People Change the Middle East*. Stanford, Ca., Stanford University Press, 2010.

Benhabib, S. and Post, R. (2008). *Another cosmopolitanism*. *The Berkeley Tanner lectures*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Bitari, N. (2013). "Yarmuk Refugee Camp and the Syrian Uprising: A View from Within". *Journal of Palestine Studies* 43 (1): 61–78.

Bornstein E. and Redfield E. (eds.). (2011). *Forces of Compassion: Humanitarianism between Ethics and Politics*. Santa Fe: SAR Press.

Bourdieu, P. (1978). "Sport and Social Class". *Social Science Information* 17: 819-840.

Brambilla, C. (2015). "Exploring the Critical Potential of the Borderscapes Concept", *Geopolitics* 20 (1): 14-34.

Bromberger, C. (2010). "Sport, Football and Masculine identity". In *Steets, Stadium worlds: Football, Space and the Built Environment,* edited by S. Frank and S. Steets, 181-194. London: Routledge.

Bromberger, C. (1995). "Football as world-view and as ritual". *French Cultural Studies* 6: 293-311.

Bulley, D. (2016). *Migration, Ethics and Power: Spaces of Hospitality in International Politics.* London: Sage, 2016.

Burnett, C. (2010). "Sport-for-development ap- proaches in the South African context: a case study analysis". *South African Journal for Research in Sport, Physical Education and Recreation* 31 (1): 29-42.

Butler, J. (2012). "Precarious Life, Vulnerability, and the Ethics of Cohabitation". *The Journal of Speculative Philosophy* 26 (2): 134-151.

Butler, J. (1999). "*Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity"*. New York, London: Routledge,

Butler, J. 1997. *Excitable Speech. A Politics of the Performative*. London: Routledge.

Can, I. and Heath, T. (2015). "In-between spaces and social interaction: a morphological analysis of Izmir using space syntax". *Journal of Housing and the Built environment* 31 (1): 31-49.

Carpi, E. (2016). "Against Ontologies of Hospitality: About Syrian Refugeehood in Northen Lebanon". *Middle East Institute*, December 9, 2014. http://www.mei.edu/content/map/against-ontologies-hospitality-about-syrian-refugeehood-northern-lebanon

Charif, M. and Hafeda, M. (2017). "A Space for Ambiguity: Play and Playfulness as Spaces of Protest". Z33 Research. http://z33research.be/2017/10/reem-charif-mohamad-hafeda-a-space-for-ambiguity-play-and-playfulness-as-spaces-of-protest/

Chatty, D. (2017). "The Syrian Humanitarian Disaster: Understanding Perceptions and Aspirations in Jordan, Lebanon and Turkey". *Global Policy* 8: 25-32.

Chetail, V. (2016). "Sovereignty and Migration in the Doctrine of the Law of Nations: An Intellectual History of Hospitality from Vitoria to Vattel". *European Journal of International Law* 27 (4): 901–922.

Chit, B., Nayel A.N. (2013), "Understanding racism against Syrian refugees in Lebanon ", Civil Society Knowledge Center, Lebanon Support, October 28, 2013. http://cskc.daleel-madani.org/paper/understanding-racism-against-syrian-refugees-lebanon

Cleland, J., Doidge, M,, Millward, P. and Widdop, P. (2018). *Collective Action and Football Fandom: A Relational Sociological Approach*. Basingstoke: Palgrave MacMillan,

Clementi, A. (2015). "No way out: the second Nakba of Palestinian refugees from Syria escaping to Turkey". *Al-Majdal* 57: 34-40.

Cobban, H. (1985). *The making of Modern Lebanon*. Bolder: Westview Press.

Collins, M. and Kay, T. (2003). *Sport and Social Exclusion.* London and New York: Routledge.

Dalal, A. (2017). "Refugee Camps and the Politics of Dwelling: Narrating Encampments of Refugees from Syria in Jordan between 2011 and 2014". Paper presented at the Conference Pluralism in Emergencies: movement, space, and religious difference. Columbia Global Centers, Amman, December 6-7, 2017.

Darling, J. (2016). "Forced migration and the city: Irregularity, informality, and the politics of presence". *Progress in Human Geography* 41 (2): 178 - 198.

Das, V. and Poole, D. (2004). "Antropology in the Margins of the State". *PoLAR*: Political and Legal Anthropology Review 30 (1): 140-144.

Deeb, L. and Harb, M. (2013). *Leisurely Islam. Negotiating Geography and Morality in Shi'ite South Beirut*. Princetown University Press.

Dionigi, F. (2016). “The Syrian refugee crisis in Lebanon: State fragility and social resilience. *LSE Middle East Centre paper series* 15. London: Middle East Centre, The London School of Economics and Political Science.

Dionigi, F. (2017). "Rethinking Borders: The Case of the Syrian Refugee Crisis in Lebanon," *POMEPS Studies* (25): 22-30.

Dorai, M.K. (2016). “Palestinian refugees and the current Syrian conflict: from settled refugees to stateless asylum seekers?” In Natalia Ribas-Mateos. *Migration, Mobilities and the Arab Spring: Spaces of Refugee Flight in the Eastern Mediterranean edited by N. Ribas-Mateos, 158-173. Cheltenam, UK: Edward Elgar Publishing.*

Dorai, M.K. (2014). “The role of transnational networks and cross-border circulation in Palestinian migration in situation of conflict”. Paper presented at the International Conference “Guests and Aliens. Reconfiguring New Mobilities After 2011”. IFEA Istanbul, 9-10 December.

Dora ̈i, M.K. (2010). “Palestinian refugee camps in Lebanon. Migration, mobility and the urbanization process“. In *Palestinian Refugees. Identity, Space and Place in the Levant*, edited by A. Knudsen and S. Anafi. Abindgon, New York: Routledge.

Doraï M.K. (2007). “Iraqi Refugees in Syria”. Paper prepared for the Conference Migration and Refugee movements in the Middle East and North Africa, The American University in Cairo, October 23-25, 2007.

Dorai, M.K (2003). “Palestinian Emigration from Lebanon to Northern Europe: Refugees, Networks and Transnational Practices”. *Refuge* 21 (2): 23-31.

Dorai, M. K. and Puig N. (eds) (2012). *L’urbanité des marges. Migrants et réfugiés dans les villes du Proche-Orient*. Beirut: Ifpo – Téraèdre.

Dorsey, J. (2016). *The Turbulent World of Middle East Soccer*. London: Hurst & Co.

Dot-Pouillard, N. (2013). “Le mouvement national palestinien et la crise syrienne : une division contenue”. In *Pas de printemps pour la Syrie*, La Découverte, edited by François Burgat , 264-267. Paris: La Découverte.

Duerr, G. (2014). "Playing for Identity and Independence: The Issue of Palestinian Statehood and the Role of FIFA". In Raab A. and Khalidi I. (Eds.), *Soccer in the Middle East. Sport in the Global Society,* edited by A. Raab and I. Khalidi, 35-48. New York: Routledge.

Edwards, J. (2017) “Cape Craft and Design Institute: The relationship between space-making and the perception of place within two refugee camps on the Turkish-Syrian border”. Paper presented at the International Conference: Beyond Crisis, Rethinking Refugee Studies, Oxford Refugee Studies Centre, March 17, 2017.

El-Housseini, R. (2012). *Pax Syriana. Elite Politics in Postwar Lebanon*. New York: Syracuse University Press.

Farah, Randa, 1999. *Popular Memory and Reconstructions of Palestinian Identity: Al-Baq’a Refugee Camp*. Doctoral Thesis, Jordan, University of Toronto.

Fassin, D. (2011). *Humanitarian Reason: A Moral History of the Present*. Berkeley: University of California Press.

Fawaz, M. (2016). “Planning and the refugee crisis: Informality as a framework for analysis and reflection”. *Planning Theory* 16(1): 99 - 115.

Fawaz, M. (2009). “Hezbollah as urban planner? Questions to and from Planning theory”. *Planning theory* 8 (4): 323-334.

Fawaz, M. (2009) “Neoliberal urbanity and the right to the city: A view from Beirut’s periphery”. *Development and Change* 40(5): 827–852.

Fawaz, M. & Peillen, I. (2003). *Urban slums reports: The case of Beirut, Lebanon”, Understanding Slums: Case Studies for the Global Report on Human Settlements*. London: Earthscan.

Feldman, I. (2017). "Humanitarian Care and the Ends of Life: The Politics of Aging and Dying in a Palestinian Refugee Camp." *Cultural Anthropology* 32(1): 42-67.

Feldman, I. (2015). “What is a camp? Legitimate refugee lives in spaces of long-term displacement”. *Geoforum* 66: 244-252.

Fiddian-Qasmiyeh, E. (2018). “Anti-Syrian banners and Graffiti in Context: Racism, Counter-Racism and Solidarity for Refugees in Lebanon”. Refugee Hosts Project, April 27, 2018. https://refugeehosts.org/2018/04/27/anti-syrian-banners-and-graffiti-in-context-racism-counter-racism-and-solidarity-for-refugees-in-lebanon/

Fiddian-Qasmiyeh, E. (2016). “Refugees Hosting Refugees”. *Forced Migration Review* 53, Special Issue “Local communities: first and last providers of protection”. www.fmreview.org/community-protection/fiddianqasmiyeh

Fiddian-Qasmiyeh, E. (2013) *The Ideal Refugees: Gender, Islam, and the Sahrawi Politics of Survival*, Syracuse: Syracuse University Press.

Fiddian-Qasmiyeh, E. (2012). "Invisible Refugees and/or Overlapping Refugeedom? Protecting Sahrawis and Palestinians Displaced by the 2011 Libyan Uprising". *International Journal of Refugee Law* 24 (2): 263–293.

Fiddian-Qasmiyeh, E. (2011) "The Inter-generational Politics of 'Travelling Memories': Sahrawi refugee youth remembering home-land and home-camp". *Journal of Intercultural Studies,* 34(6): 631-649.

Fiddian-Qasmiyeh, E. and Qasmiyeh, Y. (2013). "Refugee camps and cities in conversation" in *Rescripting Religion in the City: Migration and Religious Identity in the Modern Metropolis,* edited by J. Garnett and A. Harris. Burlington, UK: Ashgate.

Fogliata, S. (2017). *Multiple and shifting identities in between wars: The case of Palestinian Refugees fleeing Syria to Lebanon*. Turkish Journal of Middle Eastern Studies. Special Issue "Migration and Social Change", pp. 31-52.

Fogliata, S. (2017). "Back to Metal. Palestinians from Syria to Nahr El-Bared camp in Lebanon". *Refugee Hosts project*- University College London. https://refugeehosts.org/2017/06/06/back-to-metal-palestinians-from-syria-in-nahr-el-bared-camp-in-lebanon/

Fontanari, E. (2017). "Afterword. An ethnographic gaze on power and refugees". *Ethnography and Qualitative Research* 1: 143-155.

Foucault, M. (1977-78 [2007]) *Security, Territory, Population: Lectures at the Collège de France 1977-78*. Palgrave Macmillan: Basingstoke; New York.

Frangieh, G. (2015). "Lebanon Places Discriminatory Entry Restrictions on Syrians." Legal Agenda, January 22, 2015. http://english.legal-agenda.com/article.php?id=679&folder=articles&lang=en

Frello, B. (2008). "Towards a discursive analytics of movement. On the making and unmaking of movement as a object of knowledge". *Moblities* 3 (1): 25-50.

Fritzsche, Jasmin (2014). "Displacing the Displaced: Challenging the International Framework for Palestinian Refugees in light of the Syria Crisis." n°8. Cairo: The American University in Cairo.

Gabiam, N. (2016). *The Politics of Suffering: Syria's Palestinian Refugee Camps*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press.

Gabiam, N. (2011). “Spatializing Identity: The Changing Landscape of Palestinian Refugee Camps”. Birzeit University Working Paper 50. https://ssrn.com/abstract=2130401

Gabiam N. and Fiddian-Qasmiyeh E. (2016). “Palestinians and the Arab Uprisings: political activism and narratives of home, homeland, and home-camp”. *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies* 43: 731-748.

Gandolfi, P. and Fogliata, S. (2018). “*Ripensare le pratiche dell’accoglienza oltre i confini. Pratiche alternative in conversazione tra Italia e Libano”. (Rethinking the practices of welcoming beyond the borders: alternative practices in conversation between Italy and Lebanon).* Formazione, Lavoro, Persona 7 (22): 139-161.

Ghandour, M. (2013). “Who is ‘Ain al-Hilweh”. Jadaliyya, September 30, 2013. http://www.jadaliyya.com/Details/29579/Who-is-‘Ain-al-Hilweh

Giulianotti, R. (2011). “The sport, development and peace sector: a model of four social policy domains”. *Journal of Social Policy* 40 (4): 757-776.

Giulianotti, R. (1999). *Football : A Sociology of the Global Game*. Cambridge: Polity.

Gorokhoff, P. (1984). “Création et évolution d’un camp palestinien de la ban- lieue sud de Beyrouth Bourj el-Barajneh”. In *Politiques urbaines dans le Monde Arabe*, edited by F. Metral, 313-329. Lyon: Maison del L’Orient méditerranéen.

Gotham K.F. (2003). «Toward an Understanding of the Spatiality of Urban as Spatial Actors». International Journal of Urban and Regional Research, 27 (3): 723– 737.

Grbac, P. (2013). “Civitas, polis, and urbs: Reimagining the refugee camp as the city”. *Refugee Studies Centre*, Working Paper Series No. 96.

Greussing E. and Boomgarden, H.G. (2017). “Shifting the refugee narrative? An automated frame analysis of Europe’s 2015 refugee crisis”. *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies* 43 (11): 1749-1774.

Gulick, J. (1976). “The Ethos of Insecurity in Middle Eastern Culture”: In *Responses to Change: Society, Culture, and Personality,* edited by G. A. De Vos*, 137-156.* New York: D. Van Nostrand Company.

Habib, E. (2012). “Bourj Barajneh: Reinterpretation of a Palestine Refugee Camp in Beirut Morphology, Internal Dynamics and Articulations to its Immediate Environment”. Master thesis, Politecnico di Milano- Faculty of Archtecture and Society, Academic Year 2011-2012. https://www.politesi.polimi.it/handle/10589/72991

Hammer, J. (2005). *Palestinians born in Exile: Diaspora and the search for a homeland.* Austin: University of Texas Press.

Hanafi, S. (2010). "Governing the Palestinian refugee camps in Lebanon and Syria: the cases of Nahr el-Bared and Yarmouk camps". In: A. Knudsen and S. Hanafi (eds.) *Palestinian refugees. Identity, space and place in the Levant,* edited by A. Knudsen and S. Hanafi. Abingdon, New York: Routledge.

Hanafi, S. (1997). *Entre deux mondes : les hommes d'affaires palestiniens de la diaspora et la construction de l'entité palestinienne*. Cairo: CEDEJ - Egypte/Soudan.

Hanafi S. and Long T. (2010). "Governance, Governmentalities, and the State of Exception in the Palestinian Refugee Camps of Lebanon", *Journal of Refugee Studies* 23 (2): 134-159.

Harb, M. (2010). "On Religiosity and Spatiality: Lessons from Hezbollah in Beirut". In *The Fundamentalist City?: Religiosity and the Remaking of Urban Spaces*, edited by N. Al Sayyad and M. Massoumi, 125-141. Abingdon: Routledge.

Harb, M. (2003). "Al-Dahiye de Beyrouth: parcours d'une stigmatisation urbaine, consolidation d'un territoire politique". *Genèses 51*: 70-91.

Harb, M. and Fawaz, M. (2010). "Influencing the Politics of Reconstruction in Haret Hreik". In *Lessons in Post-War Reconstruction: Case Studies from Lebanon in the Aftermath of the 2006 War*, edited by H. Al-Harithym, 21-45. Abingdon: Routledge.

Harb, C. and Rim S. (2014). *Social Cohesion and Intergroup Relations: Syrian Refugees and Lebanese National in the Bekaa and Akkar*. American University of Beirut and Save the Children. https://reliefweb.int/report/lebanon/social-cohesion-and-intergroup-relations-syrian-refugees-and-lebanese-nationals-bekaa

Hartmann, D. and Depro, B. (2006). "Rethinking Sports-Based Community Crime Prevention: A Preliminary Analysis of the Relationship Between Midnight Basketball and Urban Crime Rates," *Journal of Sport and Social Issues* 30 (2): 180–196.

Hatem, J. (eds.) (2016). "Planning the City through Play: Youth Efforts in Making Communal Football Fields in Beirut". Beirut: Public Works Studio.

Heide-Jørgensen, L. M. (2014). "A World of Checkpoints: Border Crossing Experiences of Palestinian Refugees from Syria in Lebanon". Master Thesis, University of Lund, Master of Arts in Middle Eastern Studies.

Hein, J. (1993). “Refugees, Immigrants, and the State”. *Annual Review of Sociology* 19: 43–59.

Hobsbawm, E. J. (1992). *Nations and nationalism since 1780: programme, myth, reality*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Houtum, H. van and T. van Naerssen (2002), “Bordering, ordering and othering”. *Tijdschrift voor Economische en Sociale Geografie* 93 (2): 125- 136.

Hunter, M. A. (2008). “Cultivating the art of safe space. Research in Drama Education”. *The Journal of Applied Theatre and Performance* 13(1): 5-21.

Janmyr, M. (2016). “Precarity in Exile: The Legal Status of Syrian Refugees in Lebanon”, *Refugee Survey Quarterly* 4: 58–78.

Janmyr, M. and Knudsen A.J. (2016). “Introduction. Hybrid Spaces”. *Humanity: An International Journal of Human Rights, Humanitarianism, and Development* 7 (3). 391-395

Jansen, B.J. (2016), “The protracted refugee camp and the consolidation of a ‘humanitarian urbanism”. *International Journal of Urban and Regional Research*.

Jensen, M.I. (2009). *The Political Ideology of Hamas: A Grassroots Perspective*. London: I.B. Tauris.

Kassir, S. (2004) *Dimuqratiyyat Suriyya wa istiqlal Lubnan: al-bahth ‘an rabi‘ Dimashq.* Beirut: Dar al-Nahar lil-Nashr.

Kawar, A. (1996). *Daughters of Palestine: Leading Women of the Palestine National Movement.* Albany: State University of New York Press.

Kevorkian, R., Nordiguian, L. and Tachjian, V. (2007). *Les Arméniens 1917-1939: La quête d’un refuge.* Beirut : Presses de l’Université Saint Joseph.

Khalidi, M.A. (ed.) (2010). *Manifestations of identity: The lived reality of Palestinian refugees in Lebanon*. Beirut: Institute for Palestine Studies; Institut français du Proche-Orient.

Khalidi, R. (1997). *Palestinian Identity: The Construction of Modern National Cosciousness*. New York, Columbia University Press.

Khalidi, R. (1986). *Under siege: PLO decision making during the 1982 war*. New York: Columbia University Press.

Khalidi, W. (1984). *Conflict and Violence in Lebanon: confrontation in the Middle East*. Cambridge: Harvard Universtiy Press.

Khalidi, M. A., and Riskedahl, D. (2010). “The Lived Reality of Palestinian Refugees in Lebanon”. In *Manifestations of identity. The lived reality of Palestinian refugees in Lebanon,* edited by M.A. Khalidi, 1-12. Beirut: Institute for Palestine Studies; Institut français du Proche-Orient

Khawaja, B. (2011). "War and Memory: The Role of Palestinian Refugees in Lebanon". *History Honors Projects* 13. https://digitalcommons.macalester.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?referer=https://www.google.it/&httpsredir=1&article=1012&context=history_honors

Lamloum, O. (2011). “Le Hezbollah Libanais et le Football: Divertissement Pieux et Socialisation Politique” [Lebanon’s Hezbollah and football: Pious entertainment and political socialization], in *Les societies civile dans le monde musulman*, edited by A. Bozza and P.J. Luizard, 215–225. Paris: La Découverte.

Le Courant, S. (2009), “Les étrangers et la rétention administrative. Entre rendre visible et redevenir invisible”, *Migrinter* (4): 29-37.

Lefaivre, L., Roode, I and Fuchs, R. (2002). *Aldo van Eyck: The playgrounds and the city.* Amsterdam: Stedelijk Museum.

Lefebvre, H. (1996). "The right to the city". In *Writings on cities*, edited by E. Kofman and E. Lebas, 147-159. Cambridge: Wiley-Blackwell.

Lefebvre, H. (1996). *Writings on cities*. Oxford: Blackwell.

Lefebvre, H. (1991). *The production of space*, Oxford: Blackwell.

Lester, S. (2014) “Play as protest: clandestine moments of disturbance and hope”. In *Education, Childhood and Anarchism: Talking to Colin Ward, edited by C.Burke and K. Jones,* 198- 209. London: Routledge.

Levitt, P. (2003). “You Know, Abraham was really the First Immigrant”. *International Migration Review* 37 (3): 847-873.

Lovell, N. (1998). *Locality and Belonging*. London: Routledge.

Lussault, M. and Levy J. (2003). *Dictionnaire de la géographie et de l’espace des societies*. Paris: Gallimard .

MacClancy, J. (1996), *Sport, Identity and Ethnicity*. Oxford, Berg,

Maestri, G. & Sarah M. Hughes (2017). “Contested spaces of citizenship: camps, borders and urban encounters”, *Citizenship Studies* (21:6), 625-639.

Malkki, L. (1996). "National Geographic: The Rooting of Peoples and the Territorialization of National Identity Among Scholars and Refugees," In *Becoming National*, edited by G. Eley and R. G. Suny, pp. 434-453. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Malkki, L. (1996). "Speechless emissaries: Refugees, humanitarianism, and dehistoricization". *Cultural Anthropology 11*(3), 377–404.

Malkki, L. (1995), *Purity and Exile: Violence, Memory, and National Cosmology among Hutu Refugees in Tanzania.* Chicago: Chicago University Press.

Maqusi, S. (2015). Spatial Violation. *Lobby Magazine,* September 10, 2015. http://bartlettlobby.com/articles/spatial-violations-beyond-relief-inside-the-palestine-refugee-camp/

Martin, D. (2015). "From spaces of exception to 'campscapes': Palestinian refugee camps and informal settlements in Beirut". *Political Geography*, 44: 9-18.

Masalha, N. (2012) *The Palestine Nakba: Decolonising history, narrating the subaltern, reclaiming memory.* London, New York: Zed Books.

Matar, D. (2011). *What is Means to be Paelstinian: Stories of Palestinian Peoplehood.* London: I.B. Tauris.

Meier, D. (2016). *Shaping Lebanon's Borderlands: Armed Resistance and International Intervention in South Lebanon*. London, New York: I.B. Tauris.

Meier, D. (2015). "The Blind Spot: Palestinian Refugees from Syria in Lebanon". In *In the Eye of the Hurricane: Lebanon and the Arab Uprisings,* edited by M. Wählisch and M. Felsch, 104-118. London: Routledge.

Mernissi, F. (2007). *La* terrazza proibita. Vita nell'harem. Giunti: Firenze.

Mernissi, F. (2009). *L'Harem e l'Occidente*. Giunti: Firenze.

Mezzadra, S. (2006). *Diritto di fuga: Migrazioni, cittadinanza, globalizzazione.* Verona: Ombre Corte.

Migdal, J. S.(2004). *Boundaries and Belonging: States and Societies in the Struggle to Shape Identities and Local Practices.* Cambridge, Cambridge University Press.

Misselwithz, P. & Hanafi, S. (2009). "Testing a New Paradigm: UNRWA's Camp Improvement Programme". *Refugee Survey Quarterly 28* (2-3): 360–388.

Monroe, K.V. (2016). *The Insecure City: Space, Power, and Mobility in Beirut*. New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press.

Mouawad, J. (2018): "Lebanese Football: Imagining a Defiant and United Lebanon?",

Middle East Critique 14 (1): 289-302.

Napolitano, V. (2015). "Yarmouk : une guerre de tous contre tous". Noria Analysis, May 2015. http://www.noria-research.com/yarmouk-une-guerre-de-tous-contre-tous/

Nicholls W., Miller B., and Beaumont J. (eds.) (2013). *Spaces of Contention: Spatialities and Social Movements*. London: Ashgate.

O'Reilly, K. (2012). *Ethnographic methods*. London and New York: Routledge

Olwig, F. and Hastrup. K. (eds.) (1997). *Sitting culture: the shifting anthropological object*. London, New York : Routledge.

Owens, P. (2009). "Reclaiming 'bare life'? Against Agamben on refugees". *International Relations* 23 (4): 567–82.

Papataxiarchis, E. (2016) 'Being "there": at the front line of the "European refugee crisis". *Anthropology Today* 32(2): 5–9.

Pappe, Ilan. *The ethnic cleansing of Palestine*. Oxford: Oneworld, 2007.

Pesquet, J.P. and Dot-Pouillard, N. (2015)." Les réfugiés syriens au Liban : l'émergence progressive d'un discours de neutralité?". *Confluences en Méditerranée* 92(8): 61–72.

Peteet, J. (2005). *Landscape of Hope and Despair: Palestinian Refugee Camps*. University of California Press.

Picard, E. (2002). *Lebanon: A Shattered Country*, London/New York: Holmes & Meier.

Pinelli, B. (2017). "Border, Politics and Subjects. Introductory notes on refugee research in Europe". Etnography and Qualitative Research 1: 5-24.

Pink, S. (2001). *Doing Ethnography: Images, Media and Representation in Research.* London: Sage.

Qandil M. (2012). "The Syrian Revolution and the Palestinian Refugees in Syria: Realities and risks". Doha: Al Jazeera Center for Studies. http://studies.aljazeera.net/mritems/Documents/2012/5/2/201252132022536734The%20Syrian%20Revolution%20and%20Palestinian%20Refugees%20in%20Syria.pdf

Raab, A. (2014). "The Universe is Shaped like a Football: Football and Revolution". *The International Journal of the History of Sport* 31 (7): 795-814.

Raab, A. (2012). "Soccer in the Middle East: an introduction". *Soccer & Society* 13 (5-6): 619-638.

Raab, A. Khalidi, I. (2016). Soccer in the Middle East. London, New York: Routledge.

Ramadan, A. (2013) “Spatialising the Refugee Camp,” *Transactions of the Institute of British Geographers* 38 (1): 65–77.

Reiche, D. (2011). “War Minus the Shooting? The Politics of Sport in Lebanon as a Unique Case in Comparative Politics”. *Third World Quarterly* 32(2): 261–277.

Rieniets, T., Sigler, J., & Christiaanse, K. (2009). O*pen City: Designing Coexis- tence*. Rotterdam: Sun Architecture.

Rommel, K. (2014) “A veritable game of the nation: on the changing status of football within the Egyptian national formation in the wake of the 2009 World Cup qualifiers against Algeria”. *Critical African Studies* 6 (2–3): 157–175,

Roncayolo, M. (1990). *La Ville et ses territoires*. Paris: Gallimard.

Roy, A., & AlSayyad, N. (Eds.). (2004). *Urban informality: Transna- tional perspectives from the Middle East, South Asia and Latin America.* Lanham, MD: Lexington Books.

Said, E. (1994). *The Politics of Dispossession: The Struggle for Palestinian Self-determination*. New York: Pantheon Books.

Said, E. (1979). “Zionism from the Standpoint of Its Victims”, *Social Text* 1: 7-58.

Saksouk-Sasso, A. (2015). “Making Spaces for Communal Sovereignty: The Story of Beirut's Dalieh,” *Arab Studies Journal* 23 (1): 296-319.

Salamah (2016). “The Unacknowledged Syrians: Mobilization of Palestinian Refugees of Yarmouk in the Syrian Revolution”. *Confluences Méditerranée* 99: 47-60.

Salazar, N.B. (2010). “Towards and anthropology of cultural mobilities”. *Crossing: Journal of Migration and Culture*, 1: 53-68.

Salih, R. (2013). “Reconciling Return and Rights: Palestinian Refugees and the Emergence of a "Political Society”. Jadaliyya, March 26, 2013. http://www.jadaliyya.com/pages/index/10814/reconciling-return-and-rights_palestinian-refugees

Sanyal, R. (2014) “Urbanizing Refuge: Interrogating Spaces of Displacement”. *International Journal of Urban and Regional Research* 38(2): 558-572.

Sassen, S. (2013) “When Territory Deborders Territoriality”, *Territory, Politics, Governance* 1 (1): 21-45.

Sayigh, R. (1995). “Palestinians in Lebanon: (Dis)solution of the refugee problem”. Race and Class (37:2), pp. 27-42.

Sayigh, R. (2004), "A House Is Not a Home: Insecurity of Habitat for Palestinian Refugees in Lebanon". Conference Report House: Loss, Refuge and Belonging, September 16–18, 2004. Trondheim, Norway, Forced Migration Review Supplement.

Sayigh, R. (2000). "Greater Insecurity for Refugees in Lebanon", *Middle East Research Information Project*, March 1, 2000. https://www.merip.org/mero/mero030100

Sfeir, J. (2008). *L'exil palestinien au Liban. Le temps des origines (1947-1952),* Paris, Editions Karthala/IFPO.

Shafie, S. (2007). *Palestinian Refugees in Lebanon*. Retrieved from Forced Migration: http://www.forcedmigration.org/research-resources/expert-guides/palestinian-refugees-in-lebanon/fmo018.pdf

Shami, S. (1993) "The Social Implications of Population Displacement and Resettlement: An Overview with a Focus on the Arab MiddleEast", *International Migration Review* 101: 4–33.

Siklawi, R. (2012). "The Dynamic of the Amal Movement in Lebanon 1975-1990". *Arab Studies Quarterly* 34 (1): 4-26.

Siklawi R. (2010). "The Dynamics of Palestinian Political Endurance in Lebanon". *The Middle East Journal* 64 (4): 597-611.

Soja, E. (1996). *Thirdspace: Journeys to Los Angeles and Other Real-and-Imagined Places*. Oxford: Basil Blackwell.

Sorek, T. (2007). *Arab Soccer in a Jewish State: The Integrative Enclave*. New York: Cambridge University Press.

Stevens, D.A. (2014). "Shifting Conceptions of Refugee Identity and Protection: European and Middle Eastern Approaches". In *Refugee protection and the role of law: conflicting identities*, edited by S. Kneebone, D. Stevens and L. Baldassar. London: Routledge.

Sukarieh, M., Tanock, S. (2012)."On the Problem of Over-Researched Communities: The Case of Shatila Palestinian Refugee Camp in Lebanon". *Sociology* 47(3): 494-508.

Tazzioli, M. (2012). "S/confinamenti degli spazi-frontiera: Zarzis, Ras Ajdir, Tataouine". In *Spazi in migrazione. Cartoline di una rivoluzione,* edited by F. Sossi. Verona: Ombre corte.

Traboulsi, F. (2007). *A History of Modern Lebanon* London: Pluto Press.

Turnbull, J, Sattererlee. T., Raab, A. (eds.) (2008). *The Global Game. Writers on Soccer*. Nebraska: Bison Books.

United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) and UN-Habitat (2014) *Housing, Land and Property Issues in Lebanon: Implications of the Syrian Refugee Crisis*. Beirut: UN.

Urry, J. (2007). *Mobilities*. Cambridge: Polity Press

Verdeil, E. (2010). *Beyrouth et ses urbanistes. Une ville en plans (1946-1975)*. Beirut: Presses de l'Ifpo.

Vignal, L. (2017). "The changing borders and borderlands of Syria in a time of conflict". *International Affairs* 93 (4): 809–827.

Wagg, S. (ed.) (1995). *Giving the Game Away: Football, Politics, and Culture on Five Continents*. London; New York: Leicester University Press.

Watson, S. (2018). "The Challenges of collaboration and democratic participation in turbulent and unsettled times". *Tracce Urbane: Italian Journal of Urban Studies*, 2018 (3), pp. 66-74.

Woroniecka-Krzyzanowska, D. (2017). "The right to the camp: Spatial politics of protracted encampment in the West Bank". *Political Geography* 61: 160-169.

Yassin, N., Osseiran, T, Rassi R and Boustani, M. (2015). *No Place to Stay? Reflections on the Syrian Refugee Shelter Policy in Lebanon*. Beirut: Issam Fares Institute.

Zahar, M.J. (2002). "Peace by Unconventional Means: Lebanon's Ta'if Agreement". In J. Stedman et al. (ed.), *Ending Civil Wars; the Implementation of Peace Agreements*, Boudler & Lonon: Lynne Rienner Publishers. pp. 567-597.

Zaman, T. (2011). "Lessons learned: Palestinian refugees from Baghdad to Damascus." *International Journal of Contemporary Iraqi Studies* 5 (2): 263–275.

Zeidan, D. (2017). "Contingent Reconstruction: Negotiating Space, Power and Identity in Post-War South Lebanon". Paper presented at Third Conference of the Arab Council for the Social Sciences: "State, Sovereignty and Social Space in the Arab Region: Emerging Historical and Theoretical Approaches". March 10-12, 2017, Beirut, Lebanon.

List of quoted interviews

- Abed A. (March 2016, 10). Personal interview, Beddawi camp.
- Abed M. (April 2017, 5). Personal interview, Bourj el-Barajneh camp.
- Abed M. (May 2017, 8). Personal interview, Bourj el-Barajneh camp.
- Abed R. (November 2016, 10). Personal interview, Nahr el-Bared camp.
- Abou Ammar (March 2017, 23). Personal interview, Bourj el-Barajneh camp.
- Abou Jamal (December 2014, 12). Personal interview. Bourj el-Barajneh camp.
- Abou Khaled (April 2017, 10). Personal interview, Bourj el-Barajneh camp.
- Abou Khaled (June 2017, 22). Personal interview: Bourj el-Barajneh camp
- Abou Khaled (September 2017, 30). Personal interview, Bourj el-Barajneh camp.
- Abou Khalil (June 2017, 12). Personal interview. Bourj el-Barajneh camp.
- Abou Mahmoud (April 2017, 10). Personal interview, Bourj el-Barajneh camp.
- Abou Tareq (July 2017, 11). Personal interview, Bourj el-Barajneh camp.
- Abou Tareq (June 2017, 22). Personal interview: Bourj el-Barajneh camp
- Ahmad B. (March 2017, 4). Personal interview, Sahel Football Field, Beirut.
- Ahmed T.(December 2014, 2). Personal interview, Bourj el-Barajneh camp.
- Ali D. (May 2017, 11). Personal interview, Bourj el-Barajneh camp.
- Ali R. (October 2016, 11). Personal interview, Bourj el-Barajneh camp.
- Amin N. (October 2016, 11). Personal interview, Beirut Sportive Centre.
- Amin R. (October 2017, 12). Personal interview, Shatila camp.
- Ayman H. (July 2017, 22). Personal interview, Beirut.
- Bassem M. (October 2017, 12). Personal interview, Beirut.
- Bassem R. (Febryary 2015, 21). Personal interview, Ei nel Hilweh camp.
- Battout T.(October 2017, 1). Personal interview, Shatila camp.
- Bayan B. (July 2017, 10). Personal interview, Beirut.
- Boudy P. (October 2014, 17). Personal interview, Bourj el-Barajneh camp.

- Coach Saleh (September 2016, 13). Personal interview, Sahel Football Field, Beirut.
- Coach Yemen (June 2017, 5). Personal interview, Qasqas Football Field (Beirut).
- Coline P. (November 2016, 11). Personal interview, Tripoli.
- Ehab D. (October 2016, 20). Personal interview, Boj el-Barajneh.
- Ehab D. (October 2017, 10). Personal interview, Bourj el-Barajneh camp
- Ehab D.(November 12, 2017). Personal interview, Bourj el-Barajneh camp.
- Fatma A. (December 2014, 14). Personal interview, Shatila.
- Fatma A. (December 2014, 17). Personal interview, Bourj el-Barajneh camp.
- Fatma A. (March 2015, 3). Personal interview, Bourj el-Barajneh camp
- Fatma M. (November 2016, 10). Personal interview, Nahr el-Bared camp.
- Ghassan B. (December 2014, 12) Personal interview. Bourj el-Barajneh camp.
- Ghassan B. (March 2017, 21). Personal interview, Bourj el-Barajneh camp.
- Hani (October 2016, 12). Personal interview, Bourj el-Barajneh
- Hussein (June 2017, 22). Personal interview, Bourj el-Barajneh camp
- Hussein (October 2016, 20). Personal interview. Bourj el-Barajneh camp
- Ibrahim (June 2016, 3). Personal interview, Bourj el-Barajneh.
- Jamal al-Khatib (October 2017, 25). Personal interview, Beirut Qasqas Stadium.
- Jamila (July 2017, 10). Personal interview, Shatila camp.
- Khaled (June 2017, 11). Personal interview, Bourj el-Barajneh camp.
- Khaled (June 2017, 22). Personal interview, Bourj el-Barajneh camp.
- Khaled (September 4, 2016). Personal interview, Bourj el-Barajneh camp
- Lisa Gilliam (December 30, 2014). Personal interview, Amman.
- Louay (April 2017, 22). Personal interview, Bourj el-Barajneh camp.
- Louay (October 7, 2017). Personal interview, Beirut.
- Mahmoud A. (December 2017, 1). Personal interview, Bourj el-Barajneh camp.
- Mahmoud A. (October 13, 2016). Personal interview, Haret Hreik.
- Mahmoud M. (November 2015, 19). Personal interview, Nahr el-Bared.
- Mahmoud M. (October 2016, 2). Personal interview, Beddawi camp

- Mahmoud M.(October 2016, 13). Personal interview, Nahr el-Bared Camp.
- Mahmoud R. (September 2017, 15). Personal interview, Beirut.
- Majdi A. (March 2017, 4). Personal interview, Shatila Camp
- Majdi A. (October 2016, 3). Pesonal interview, Shatila camp.
- Majdi A. (October 2017, 25). Personal interview, Beirut Qasqas Stadium
- Majdi A. (September 2017, 30). Personal interview, Shatila camp.
- Majdi A.(October 2017, 23). Personal interview, Shatila camp.
- Manal R. (February 2015, 8). Personal interview, Beddawi camp.
- Matteo B. (October 2016, 27). Personal interview, Beirut.
- Najem M.(December 2014, 12). Personal interview, Bourj el-Barajneh camp.
- Nassar A. (March 2017, 8). Personal interview, Bourj el-Barajneh camp
- Nassar A. (March 2018, 11). Personal Interview, Bourj-el-Barajneh camp.
- Niazy B. (May 2016, 2). Personal interview, Bourj el-Barajneh camp.
- Nisrine (November 2014, 7). Personal interview, Shatila camp.
- Noha R. (February 2017, 5). Personal interview, Beirut.
- Noha R. (March 2017, 4). Personal Interview, Beirut.
- Nour T. (November 2014, 7). Personal interview, Shatila camp.
- Noura Y. (December 2014, 14). Personal interview, Nahr el-Bared camp.
- Noura Y. (November 2016, 10). Personal interview, Nahr el-Bared camp.
- Raed U. (November 2014, 14). Personal interview, Beddawi camp.
- Rami N. (April 2018, 10). Personal interview, Bourj el-Barajneh camp.
- Rami N. (July 2017, 11). Personal interview, Bourj el-Barajneh camp.
- Rasha R. (March 2016, 12). Personal interview, Sabra-Beirut.
- Rawan R. (November 2016, 10). Personal interview, Nahr el-Bared camp.
- Shadi E. (June 2017, 12). Personal interview, Bourj el-Barajneh camp.
- Shaza T. (September 2015, 12). Personal Interview, Bourj el-Barajneh camp.
- Sheikh Mohamed (June 2017, 12). Public discourse, Bourj el-Barajneh camp.
- Sheikh Mohamed (June 2017, 12). Public discourse, Bourj el-Barajneh camp.
- Souheil A.N. (26/10/2016). Mar Elias Camp, Personal interview.

- Tarek (May 2015, 4). Personal Interview, Nahr el-Bared camp.
- Yasser R. (December 2014, 9). Personal interview, Nahr el-Bared Camp.
- Yazan A. (April 2018, 10). Personal interview, Bourj el-Barajneh camp.
- Yazan A. (April 2018, 10). Personal interview, Bourj el-Barajneh camp.
- Yazan A. (April 2018, 4). Personal interview, Bourj el-Barajneh camp.
- Yazan A. (June 2017, 11). Personal interview, Bourj el-Barajneh camp.
- Yazan A. (June 2017, 3). Personal interview, Bourj el-Barajneh camp.
- Yazan A. (March 2016, 18). Personal interview, Bourj-el-Barajneh camp.
- Yazan A. (November 2017, 19). Personal interview, Bourj-el-Barajneh camp
- Yazan A. (October 2016, 10). Personal interview, Bourj el-Barajneh camp
- Yazan A. (October 2016, 10). Personal interview, Bourj el-Barajneh camp
- Yemen A. (October 11, 2017). Personal interview, Bourj el-Barajnej camp.
- Yemen A.(February 2017, 13). Personal interview, Bourj el-Barajneh camp.
- Yousef R.(March 2017, 21). Personal interview. Bourj el-Barajneh camp
- Youssef L. (February 8, 2015). Personal interview, Beddawi camp.
- Zaher D. (November 2014, 20). Personal interview, Beddawi camp.
- Zaher D. (September 2017, 23). Personal interview, Bourj el-Barajneh.
- Zizette D. (14 2014, 11). Personal interview, Beirut.