

PERMANENT TEMPORARINESS

The urbanisation process of the Jabal al-Hussein refugee camp

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abstract - Refugee camps are considered temporal places, outside of the normal juridical order, in which people are waiting to restart their lives in a new place or return to their original homes. The Palestinian refugee camps, which have existed for almost 70 years now, challenges these conceptions. The development of the Jabal al-Hussein camp, one of the Palestinian refugee camps in Amman, Jordan, from tent camp to neighbourhood, its governmentality by both the Jordan government and UNRWA, and the new social structures combined show in this case study that the camp is a very paradoxical and ambiguous spatial form in terms of temporality, exclusion and stagnation. Or in other words, in its permanence, inclusion and identity. Therefore, we must reconsider the theories on refugee camps and shift our focus from the symbolic-political to the material-lived.

keywords - palestinian refugee camps, urbanisation, temporariness, Jabal al-Hussein

PROLOGUE

Some years ago, I was wandering the streets of Bethlehem. Apparently, I looked a little lost when a car stopped beside me and the driver asked me if I was looking for the refugee camp. I was surprised and felt unread since I didn't even know there was a refugee camp located near the city. The driver offered to take me and I gratefully accepted. While I was wondering when the car would leave the city and drive into the hilly surroundings of Bethlehem, the driver stopped the car and told me we had arrived. A bit confused I thanked the driver and stepped out of the car into a fully developed neighbourhood with buildings of even four stories high. This was definitely not what I thought a refugee camp would look like.

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INTRODUCTION

*'In this age of conflict, mass migrations and climate change, the refugee camp has been and remains a crucial spatial formation in the struggles over territories, borders and identities.'*¹ – Adam Ramadan

Refugee camps are often seen as temporary spaces in response to an emergency, where displaced persons reside in rows of tents, waiting. Yet what happens when this situation lingers on for more than half a century? Palestinian refugees, who had to flee their homes in 1948 as a result of the Arab-Israeli war or in the years after, have been living in refugee camps located in the Occupied Palestinian Territories (OPT) or neighbouring Arab countries like Jordan, Lebanon and Syria for more than seventy years. It has become the largest and oldest refugee population in current times.² This makes the Palestinian refugees camps the most suitable to challenge the conventional theories on camps.

Nowadays, most of the Palestinian camps are swallowed up in the urban context of mayor cities and are hardly distinguishable from adjacent neighbourhoods. However, this process was everything but self-evident since the camps play a highly political role. For the Palestinians, as well as the host states, the camps are seen as the material testament of their right to return to their original homes. Therefore, there has always been a fear that development would lead to the permanency of their stay in the camp. Consequently, the urbanisation process of the camps has been affected by a constant interplay between *'the political need to prevent the permanent implantation of Palestinians ... , and the everyday needs of ordinary people for development, sanitation and a healthy environment.'*³

A significant amount of research has been conducted into the Palestinian refugee camps, because of their exceptional aspects concerning time, political meaning and urbanity. Most of this research is targeted on the juridical-political aspect of the camps. The most cited examples are Agamben's theories on the 'space of exception' and 'bare life'⁴ and Agier's 'camp-city'.⁵ However, both authors are also highly criticised. A main point of criticism is that studies of this kind often fail to capture the actual materiality and lived experience of the camp. By looking into both the political as well as the material aspects of the camp, we can abstract a certain discrepancy between the two and see their different influence on the urbanisation of the camps. The aim of this paper is step aside from the static concept of a refugee camp and show the shifting

¹ Ramadan, Adam. "Spatialising the refugee camp." *Transactions of the Institute of British Geographers* 38, no. 1, 2013: 65.

² Bashford, Alison ; Strange, Carolyn. "Palestinian Refugee Camps: Reinscribing and Contesting Memory and Space: Randa Farah." In *Isolation*, Routledge, 2003: 183.

³ Ramadan, 2013: 72-73.

⁴ Agamben, Giorgio. *Homo sacer: Sovereign power and bare life*. Stanford University Press, 1998.

⁵ Agier, Michel. *Managing the undesirables*. Polity, 2011.

characteristics that a camp, its inhabitants, buildings and governing parties have. This research will show how different perspectives, needs and urgencies often reside next to each other, while being each other's complete opposites. It is important to research these paradoxes if we want to move forward in the way we set up and run refugee camps.

In this paper, refugee camps are viewed from a historical and theoretical perspective. It does not wish to draw any conclusions about or pass judgement upon the Israeli/Palestine conflict. By using mostly qualitative data it will give a deeper understanding of the urbanisation of refugee camps. A literature review will be conducted on the history and theory of refugee camps as an urban form. In addition, a case study will be performed on the Jabal al-Hussein refugee camp. This camp proved itself suitable as a case study project for different reasons. Firstly, the camp was set up almost immediately after the start of the Israeli/Palestine conflict. This means that at that time, there was no clue about how long the situation would be going to last. Secondly, the situation for the Palestinians in Jordan is substantially different from situations in other host countries, since the government granted most of the Palestinians Jordan citizenship. Thirdly, the location of the camp, which is currently in the middle of Jordan capital, Amman. To analyse the camp, primary and secondary data will be used. Primary data in the form of maps and photographs of the camp. Secondary data by means of articles, papers, and books with ethnographical, historical or spatial research. The case study will mostly focus on the process of urbanization and the camps ambiguous character, between the '*symbolic-political and the material-lived*.'⁶

In the first chapter the research will start with a literature review on the theory of refugee camps. The ideas of Agamben about the 'space of exception' and the 'bare life' are considered, as well as the more recent work by Agier. Both works are essential when conceptualising the refugee camp. However, this research will also look into other perspectives and the relation between the theory and the Palestinian camps.

To fully understand the concept of the camp, the history of refugee camps as a spatial and political body is researched in the second chapter. This examination is done by a concise genealogical research on the camp in a broader sense and the Palestinian refugee camp in particular.

In the third chapter the case study on the Jabal al-Hussein camp will be conducted. The urbanisation process, both in material and political way, will be researched on the basis of photos, maps and written resources.

In mapping out this process, a new perspective on the refugee camp will be offered in the fourth chapter, by discussion three dimensions: temporality, exclusion and stagnation. Or its permanence, inclusion and identity, if you will.

⁶Abourahme, Nasser. "Assembling and spilling-over: towards an 'ethnography of cement' in a Palestinian refugee camp." *International Journal of Urban and Regional Research* 39, no. 2, 2015: 202.

CONCEPTUALISING THE REFUGEE CAMP

*'By belonging neither here nor there, refugees challenge the assumed link between nation, state and citizen.'*⁷ - Simon Turner

Refugee camps are extraordinary spatial phenomena. They are erected in response to an emergency as a temporal solution to accommodate groups of people, by the refugees themselves, host countries, non-governmental organisations or the UN. Refugees are stateless and the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), the UN organ that is responsible for refugees worldwide, can't grant them the rights a state can grant them. This means that public and private spheres are hard to define in the camp, since these spheres are often conceived in relationship with the state. Because of this indistinctness of public and private, the camps are often seen as the antithesis of cities. According to UNHCR around 60% of the refugees are living in urban areas and the camp- and urban refugees are often seen as different categories.⁸ But what if the camp is located in the urban context of a city? And what if the temporary situation lingers on for decades? These are two important paradoxes of space and time in the theoretical framework of refugee camps. In the vast majority of refugee camp studies from recent years that try to deal with these paradoxes, the theories of Agamben and Agier, praised and criticized, are predominant.

In his book *Homo Sacer*, Italian philosopher Agamben developed a theoretical framework on camps. He argues that camps are places in a 'state of exception' in which its inhabitants live the 'bare life'. The 'bare life' must be seen as a life without rights and values, stripped of any political conditions. A life whose existence is determined by the sovereign. Herewith, Agamben follows the ideas of Arendt, a philosopher who herself had to flee Nazi Germany. Arendt demonstrates that human rights come with citizenship, and because refugees don't have citizenship, they live the 'bare life'. She explains that *'the conception of human rights, based upon the assumed existence of a human being as such, broke down at the very moment when those who professed to believe in it were for the first time confronted with people who had indeed lost all other qualities and specific relationships – except that they were still human.'*⁹

Agamben tries to connect the ideas of Arendt on refugees, with the concept of 'biopolitics' by Foucault, another philosopher from the previous century. Biopolitics is the idea that political power is practiced on and through the embodiment of the life of people. This is translated in Agamben's take on the camp as a 'state of exception', a place of exclusion where different laws apply, governed in a totalitarian way and where people are limited to make choices about their own lives. He argues that *'the camp is the space that is opened when the state of exception begins to become the rule. In the camp, the state of exception, which was essentially a temporary suspension*

⁷ Turner, Simon. "What is a refugee camp? Explorations of the limits and effects of the camp." *Journal of Refugee Studies* 29, no. 2, 2016: 140.

⁸ UNHCR. "Global trends. Forced displacement in 2015". 2016: 53.

⁹ Arendt, Hannah. *The Origins of Totalitarianism*. Schocken Books. 1951: 229.

*of the rule of law on the basis of a factual state of danger, is now given a permanent spatial arrangement, which as such nevertheless remains outside the normal order.*¹⁰

It must be noted that Agamben mostly based his theories on the examination of the Nazi concentration camps, which are in essence completely different from refugee camps. From an urban point of view, Agamben defines the camp in its exceptionality by comparing it to the city, with the city as an embodiment of the 'normal' social order.

Contrary to Agamben's thoughts, Agier, a French anthropologist, sees the camp not as the antithesis of the city, but questions if the camp can become a city. He, unlike Agamben, focussed specifically on the refugee camp, instead of on the more generic form of camps. His research is based mostly on his fieldwork in African refugee camps, but also addresses the Palestinian camps in their exceptionality. He argues that '*camps are places of relative closure but they are also cosmopolitan crossroads.*'¹¹ However, in both Agamben's and Agier's readings the camps are seen as extraterritorial, which means that they are not part of the jurisdiction of the host country. With this extraterritoriality in mind, Agier expresses the camp as a 'space of exception'. With the alteration of Agamben's word 'state' in 'space', one could merge other marginalized urban spaces, such as slums, banlieues and ghettos in the same category as camps. The lives in these other 'spaces of exception' are expressions of the 'bare life' as well, according to Agier. The notion of the similarities between slums and camps, make Agier claim that '*the refugee camp has to be understood in continuity with the urban landscape (inclusion through marginalization) as opposed to something apart from it.*'¹² Where Agamben claims that the camp inhabitants live a 'bare life', Agier defines the camps as '*zones of exceptional rights and power.*'¹³ He does express the paradox of the refugee camps as temporary without ending and explains that camps are hybrid to the needs of the inhabitants. He thereby moderates the claims of Agamben of the camp as a place without agency.

In recent years, some other perspectives on refugee camps, contradictory to those of Agamben and Agier, have developed. Especially the concept of the 'bare life' is often considered untrue by other scholars. As Schiocchet points out, '*Agamben neglects a central piece of Foucault's theory: the microphysics of power, in other words, the realization that power is not located in the subjects but in relational dynamics.*'¹⁴ He argues that Agamben overlooked that refugees never lose their ability for resistance. One step further is the idea that the lives of the inhabitants are not unpolitical, but hyper-politicized. It is precisely the lack of citizenship, rights and value in the lives of the refugees that creates a new political meaning in the camp. In reaction to this, Grbac

¹⁰ Agamben, Giorgio. *Homo sacer: Sovereign power and bare life*. Stanford University Press, 1998: 169.

¹¹ Agier, Michel, and Clara Lecadet. *Un monde de camps*. Paris: La Découverte, 2014. (translation by Turner, 143.)

¹² Schiocchet, Leonardo. "Palestinian refugees in Lebanon: is the camp a space of exception." *Mashriq & Mahjar: Journal of Middle East and North African Migration Studies* 2, no. 1, 2014: 135.

¹³ Agier, Michel. "Managing the undesirables." *Polity*, 2011: 82.

¹⁴ Schiocchet, 2014: 133.

expanded the well-known concept of Henri Lefebvre's 'right to the city' with the notion of the 'right to the camp'. Hereby he proposed to give inhabitants of the camps the right to participate in and appropriate the space of the camp, which ultimately makes the camp an urban entity. In addition to this, Sigona introduces the concept of 'campzenship'. This special form of citizenship demonstrates political agency in the lives of refugees. One of the things that show this agency is the '*creation of new politics through different means, such as architecture and material*.'¹⁵ The architecture and materiality of the camp often become a symbol of resistance against the temporality of the camps.

Additional to the criticism on the 'bare life', is the critique on the concept of the camp as a 'space of exception'. The exceptionality is often explained along the time dimension. Refugee camps are set up in response to emergencies like wars or natural disasters, and with the intention to be dismantled when another durable solution is found. Therefore the camps are '*exceptional, temporary and often in legal grey zones*', definitely distinct from the everlasting city.¹⁶ However, Herz in his book *From Camp to City* developed a different view towards the relationship between camp and city. While the city is often perceived as an open place and the camp as a closed one, he argues that the city's openness isn't that explicit as well. When we look at cities throughout history, there are always some sort of controlling measures taken, like medieval city walls, civil registration offices or CCTV equipment in current cities.¹⁷ Therefore, the distinction between camp and city is not quite so clear-cut. In addition this paper will show that the enclosure of the camp isn't that exact as well. As a reaction to all the criticism on Agamben, Abourahme advocates the misreading of Agamben's argument by many scholars. He argues that Agamben's means were never to conceptualise the camps, but '*rather to use the figure or diagram of the abstract camp to conceptualize the state of exception (not vice versa)*.'¹⁸

All things considered, '*the refugee camp, positioned between formality and informality, mobility and immobility, permanence and impermanence, is a space of paradox*.'¹⁹ To analyse this paradox the camps are often compared to cities as opposites, but while camps are turning into city-like spaces themselves, we need to rethink this opposition.

To rethink the opposition of the camp and the city, the Palestinian camps, located within an urban context and urbanised themselves, form a relevant case study. Whereas refugee camps are built as a temporal solution, Palestinian camps have existed for over 70 years, becoming an exceptional example within the exceptional

¹⁵ Oesch, Lucas. "The refugee camp as a space of multiple ambiguities and subjectivities." *Political Geography* 60, 2017: 112.

¹⁶ Turner, Simon. "What is a refugee camp? Explorations of the limits and effects of the camp." *Journal of Refugee Studies* 29, no. 2, 2016: 140.

¹⁷ Herz, Manuel, and ETH Studio Basel, Contemporary City Institute. "*From Camp to City Refugee Camps of the Western Sahara*." Baden, Lars Müller, 2013: 490.

¹⁸ Abourahme, Nasser. "Assembling and spilling-over: towards an 'ethnography of cement' in a Palestinian refugee camp." *International Journal of Urban and Regional Research* 39, no. 2, 2015: 201.

¹⁹ Grbac, Peter. "*Civitas, polis, and urbs*." Working Papers Series 96. Refugee Studies Centre, Oxford Department of International Development, University of Oxford, 2013: 3.

spaces. They developed not only in a material way, but they also experienced a transformation in social, economic, and political organization. Therefore, the gap between the Palestinian camps and the conventional conceptualisation of the refugee camp is expanding. Agier states that *'the more general issue in the refugee camps, - as soon as their existence persists beyond the moment of emergency and is established for a longer duration - is that of their transformation into spaces of identification, relationships and even memory for those women and men who live there (albeit waiting for a possible 'return home') for years or decades, or who have been born and marry there, have buried their dead and established a range of relationships with the local population.'*²⁰ The depoliticization of the lives of the Palestinian refugees is hardly believable, looking at the fact that the Palestinian camps are often seen as the material testament of their right of return. For them the camps are an indispensable matter of their politics. Besides, in many camps the old social composition of the former Palestinian villages is still adhered to. As Peteet shows in her book *Landscape of Hope and Despair*, neighbours are still neighbours and village elders are still in power in the camps. Public and private spaces are often filled with Palestinian symbols and flags. Schiocchet argues that the social world of the Palestinian refugees is defined as much by the 'imagined' Palestinian nation as by the new urban context that they are in. *'In this sense, while the camp may be seen as a marginal space of exception from the lenses of the urban landscape, it is sometimes the very core of an imagined community.'*²¹

As shown above, the refugee camp is a hybrid entity and the Palestinian cases challenges all conceptualisations. Are they still even refugee camps? Or did they evolve in marginalized neighbourhoods? The line between citizens and refugees, city and camp, is fading. As more camps last longer and their temporariness is getting challenged, the opposition between camp and city needs to be reconsidered. What is the role of the words 'refugee camp', when we can't see the difference with adjacent neighbourhoods? Do we need to change the conceptualisation of the refugee camp or do we need to stop calling camps, camps? The camp will probably prove itself as more than a 'space of exception'. After this elaboration on the theoretical framework on refugee camps, we will now look into the history of camps.

HISTORY OF THE REFUGEE CAMP

To get a better understanding of the refugee camp, besides the different theories about them, it is needed to look into their origin and development over time. The camp is a long existing phenomenon, but its definition has always remained fluid. The word camp is subtracted from the Latin *campus* which can be translated with 'level ground' and in Roman times was meant to refer to both military and sport grounds. Since then, the camp has gradually diverged into camps with different goals and purposes. For all of

²⁰ Agier, Michel. *"Managing the undesirables."* Polity, 2011: 56.

²¹ Schiocchet, Leonardo. "Palestinian refugees in Lebanon: is the camp a space of exception." *Mashriq & Mahjar: Journal of Middle East and North African Migration Studies* 2, no. 1, 2014: 135-136.

them the generic definition is '*all sites that are spatially bounded and have a temporary existence.*'²²

In the world of camps, a rather new invention is the camp of containment, of which the refugee camp is a specific category. There is a disagreement under scholars about the first occurrence of these camps. Some claim that the first camps of containment were established in French colonies in the late 19th century,^{23 24} others suggest that the camps in Cuba in the late 19th century, at that time a Spanish colony, were the first.^{25 26} However, the primary impetus to establish camps at that time was to detain original inhabitants of the colonies to ward off any rebellion. This concept quickly gained popularity among other colonial powers such as the English in South-Africa and the Germans in Hereroland. In her research on the genealogy of camps, McConnachie divided the camps of containment in three categories: the prisoner of war camps, internment camps and camps as a response to forced migration.²⁷ It may seem far-fetched to refer to these first two types of camps since they have a totally different context and purpose than refugee camps. However, as noted by Grbac, these categories combined give three principal perspectives about camps. '*First, many of the camps were created spontaneously. Second, the camps emerged in the midst of conflict, unrest, and violence. Third, the camps reflect a more profound and deeper insight into why there was an immediate and spontaneous need to round up large number of prisoners and to treat them as cattle or as cargo. In certain respects, the motivation can be traced to political ideology.*'²⁸

The intentions to establish refugee camps totally differ from those of the internment or prisoner of war camps, but the core function remains the same: containment. Because of this core function, refugee camps are often compared to prisons. However, the big differences are that refugee camps are set up for groups of people rather than for individuals, and in response to an emergency after which the camp can be dismantled. Refugee camps, therefore, are defined not only by their spatial, segregating aspects, but also by their temporal and biopolitical character.²⁹

The origin of these of camps can be traced back to the 19th century, in which fleeing your country was substantially different from how it is experienced right now.

²² McConnachie, Kirsten. "Camps of containment: A genealogy of the refugee camp." *Humanity: An International Journal of Human Rights, Humanitarianism, and Development* 7, no. 3, 2016: 397.

²³ Kotek, Joel. "Concentration Camps." In *Encyclopedia of Genocide and Crimes against Humanity*, edited by D. L. Shelton, Detroit, MI: Macmillan. 2005: 196–200.

²⁴ Rahola, Federico. "La forme-camp. Pour une genealogie des lieux de transit et d'internement du present." *Cultures & Conflits*, no. 68, 2003: 31–50.

²⁵ Ce'saire, Aime. *Victor Schoelcher et l'abolition de l'esclavage*. Lecture: Editions Le Capucin, 2004: 34–35.

²⁶ Costantini, Dino. "L'eccezione coloniale." *DEP Deportate, esuli, profughe*. Rivista telematica di studi sulla memoria femminile no. 7, 2007: 263.

²⁷ McConnachie, 2016: 397–412.

²⁸ Grbac, Peter. *Civitas, polis, and urbs*. Working Papers Series 96. Refugee Studies Centre, Oxford Department of International Development, University of Oxford, 2013: 9.

²⁹ McConnachie, 398.

Migration didn't require passports and asylum applications were easily granted because migration was seen as an economic benefit. This changed when nationalism arose in the late 19th and early 20th century. The large numbers of displaced people from Russia and the Balkan who arrived in Europe, together with the economic malaise as a result of World War I, resulted in the situation in which refugees were no longer welcome. There is a discussion about which camps were the first refugee camps. Some argue it were the British camps during the Boer War others might say the Armenian camps, in response to the Armenian genocide.³⁰ After World War II, United Nations Relief and Rehabilitation Administration (UNRRA) was founded to give displaced people access to basic needs. UNRRA later led to the establishment of United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR). It is striking to see how in a split second, after World War II, the purpose of the camps changed from territories of inhumanity to territories of humanitarianism. As Arendt decisively formulated: '*history has created a new kind of human beings—the kind that are put in concentration camps by their foes and in internment camps by their friends.*'³¹ This is just one example of the transformative and paradoxical character of the camp.

In current times, an entire industry has emerged around refugee camps. When setting up a refugee camp, the *UNHCR Handbook for Emergencies* is guiding, from emergency management to administration. There is an entire chapter devoted to the design of the camp, called *Site Selection, Planning and Shelter*. All camps directed by UNHCR, all over the world, are being planned according to these modular guidelines even though situations and context can be completely different. To dismantle the camps, a durable solution has to be found for its inhabitant. This solution usually consists of: '*voluntary repatriation in the country of origin, integration in the host country, or resettlement in a third country.*'³² It can be argued, since the existence of camps is often a prolonged situation, that the refugee camp became the fourth solution for displaced persons. However, where in the last century it was necessary to live in a camp to get relief from UNHCR, since 2014 UNHCR adopted a new strategy trying to '*avoid the establishment of refugee camps, wherever possible*'.³³

The most revealing and remarkable camps of contemporary time are the Palestinian refugee camps. After the 1948 Arab-Israeli war around 700.000 Palestinians fled or were expelled from their homes. This event is called *Nakba* (catastrophe) by the Palestinians. After the 1967th Six-Day war a second wave of 300.000 Palestinians refugees occurred.³⁴ A separate UN entity was set up for the Palestinian refugees,

³⁰ McConnachie, Kirsten. "Camps of containment: A genealogy of the refugee camp." *Humanity: An International Journal of Human Rights, Humanitarianism, and Development* 7, no. 3, 2016: 404.

³¹ Arendt, Hannah. "*We refugees.*" *The Jewish writings*. Schocken, 2009: 265.

³² Monsutti, Alessandro. "Afghan migratory strategies and the three solutions to the refugee problem." *Refugee survey quarterly* 27, no. 1, 2008: 58.

³³ UNHCR. "*Alternatives to Camps.*" accessed March 13, 2021, <http://www.unhcr.org/5422b8f09.html>. 2014:

³⁴ Budeiri, Muna. "Dynamics of Space, Temporariness, Development and Rights in Palestine Refugees' Camps." *In UNRWA and Palestinian refugees: From relief and works to human development*. Routledge NY, 2014: 366

named the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugee in the Near East (UNRWA), where at this moment about 5.6 million Palestinian refugees are registered.³⁵ Nearly one-third of the registered Palestine refugees, more than 1.5 million individuals, live in 58 recognized Palestine refugee camps in Jordan, Lebanon, the Syrian Arab Republic, the Gaza Strip and the West Bank, including East Jerusalem.³⁶ Many of the camps have existed for about 70 years now. The cliché image of an encampment in the middle of a desert certainly does not apply to the Palestinian camps since most camps have been swallowed up by adjacent cities or have undergone an urbanisation process of their own. The refugees living in Jordan undergo a different situation than the Palestinians in other Arab countries. They have received Jordanian citizenship whilst maintaining their status as refugee. In the next chapter we will take a closer look at one specific camp. The Palestinian refugee camp, Jabal al-Hussein in Amman, Jordan.

JABAL AL-HUSSEIN

‘The understanding of the temporariness of the camp as a symbol of the refugees’ rights, the subsequent belonging to the temporary and the need for a space in which daily life can be navigated are all factors that led to making the camps the exceptional spaces that they have evolved into.’³⁷ - Muna Budeiri, head of Camp Improvement Unit of the ICIP.

The Jabal al-Hussein camp was established in 1952 to house 8000 refugees on 0.42 square kilometres, just one kilometre northwest of the Amman city centre, *Wast Al-Balad*, Jordan. The population has quadrupled to 32.000 registered refugees living in the camp today.³⁸ However, it is estimated that the actual number lies between the 40.000 and 60.000 since not all refugees have been registered and non-Palestinians are residing in the camp as well.³⁹ While expansion of the camp was prohibited by the Jordanian government and later quite impossible, because the camp is located in the urban context of Amman, the population growth has caused an enormous population and building density in the camp. This building density remains one of the few particularities that show the distinction between the camp and the city. As a result of similar urbanisation processes of the adjacent neighbourhoods, the transition between the camp and the city is hardly clear. In the following paragraphs we will analyse the genealogy of this ‘urbanisation’ process, but first the governance of the camp is being

³⁵ UNRWA. “Eligibility & Registration.” <https://www.unrwa.org/what-we-do/eligibility-registration>

³⁶ UNRWA. “Palestine refugees.” <https://www.unrwa.org/palestine-refugees>

³⁷ Budeiri, Muna. “Dynamics of Space, Temporariness, Development and Rights in Palestine Refugees’ Camps.” In *UNRWA and Palestinian refugees: From relief and works to human development*. Routledge NY, 2014: 367.

³⁸ UNRWA. “Jabal El-Hussein Camp.” Accessed March 13, 2021. <https://www.unrwa.org/where-we-work/jordan/jabal-el-hussein-camp>.

³⁹ Oesch, Lucas. “The urban planning strategy in Al-Hussein Palestinian refugee camp in Amman.” In *UNRWA and Palestinian refugees: from relief and works to human development*. 2014: 462.

looked into.

The Jabal al-Hussein camp is officially being governed by UNRWA, which is responsible for humanitarian services, and the Jordanian Department of Palestinian Affairs (DPA), which has been ruling the camp since 1988.⁴⁰ The land on which the camp has been built is, till this day, '*private land rented by the authorities for a period of 99 years.*'⁴¹ This underscores the temporality of the camp and just one of the issues that occurs in the discussion about developing the camp. Despite this discussion, the DPA is responsible for limited improvement projects, such as shelter renovations. Improvement of the camps has always been a problematic issue because the Palestinians, as well as the host-countries and UNRWA, see the camp as the 'material testament' of the 'right to return' (*haq al-'awda*). The right to return '*as the ground and horizon of liberation, is affirmed in the continued existence of the camp. The camp is the living memory or archive of displacement; it is both the marker of dispossession and the means to its resolution.*'⁴² However, after a while UNRWA realized that the condition of the camp influences the living conditions strongly, so they started intervening in housing and infrastructure as a part of their humanitarian mission. In 1975 the responsibility of the housing regulations was transferred from UNRWA to the DPA, which increasingly softened these regulations.⁴³ For example, where first only one floor shelters were permitted, now some houses even have a, tolerated, fourth floor.⁴⁴ One year after the transferral of responsibility to the DPA, the Camp Services Improvement Committee (CSIC) was established under the authority of the DPA. This committee serves as a representation of the camp residents and is responsible for different services in the camp such as infrastructure improvements project or health services. Due to the great responsibilities of the camp and services, resembling those of a welfare state, the DPA is often referred to as the '*state in the state*'.⁴⁵

Jordan has always been one of the most tolerant host states towards the Palestinians since they gave citizenship (*muwatana*) to Palestinians in 1954 and have always pushed towards integration of the camps into the cities as much as possible, without limiting the 'right to return'.^{46 47} However, in the first decades after the

⁴⁰ Oesch, Lucas. "An Improvised Dispositif: Invisible Urban Planning in the Refugee Camp." *International Journal of Urban and Regional Research* 44, no. 2, 2020: 358.

⁴¹ Al Hussein, Jalal J. "*The management of the Palestinian refugee camps in Jordan between logics of integration and exclusion.*" Available at SSRN 2166837, 2010: 10

⁴² Abourahme, Nasser, and Sandi Hilal. "Intervention:(self) urbanization and the contours of political space in Dheisheh refugee camp." *Jerusalem Quarterly* 38, 2009: 43.

⁴³ Destremau, Blandine. "*Les camps de réfugiés palestiniens et la ville: entre enclave et quartier.*" Amman, ville et société, 1996: 539.

⁴⁴ Oesch, Lucas. "The urban planning strategy in Al-Hussein Palestinian refugee camp in Amman." In *UNRWA and Palestinian refugees: from relief and works to human development*. 2014: 474.

⁴⁵ Destremau, 21.

⁴⁶ UNRWA. "*Jordanian Nationality.*" Accessed March 14, 2021. <https://www.unrwa.org/content/jordanian-nationality>

⁴⁷ Al-Hamarnah, Ala. "The Social and Political Effects of Transformation Processes in Palestinian Refugee Camps in the Amman Metropolitan Area (1989–99)", in G. Joffé (ed.) *Jordan in Transition*, London: Hurst & Co. 2002: 174.



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Map of the Jabal al-Hussein refugee camp in its urban context.

⁴⁸ Map retrieved from Milvusmaps (last edit 11 September 2020), edited by the author

⁴⁹ Boundaries of the camp retrieved from Wikimapia (last modification 3 years ago) and discription from Oesch, Lucas. "The urban planning strategy in Al-Hussein Palestinian refugee camp in Amman." In *UNRWA and Palestinian refugees: from relief and works to human development*. 2014: 461.

establishment of the camp, while located within the urban context of Amman, the camp was never part of any municipal urban plan. At least not officially. As Oesch discovered in his fieldwork, the DPA sometimes acted as an intermediary, through which other institutes could work on the development of the camp. *'Through this institutional 'filter', these conventional institutions involved in urban transformation and planning in Amman were not identified in official discourses as performing urban development within the space of the camp.'*⁵⁰ So by covering up the involvement of the Greater Amman Municipality, the Housing and Urban Development Corporation (HUDC) and other non-governmental organization (NGO's) through the intervention of the DPA, the actual development became more accepted by both Palestinians and Jordanians. Besides these planned developments by the DPA and UNRWA, mostly the refugees themselves were improving their houses with their own resources or with the help of the DPA or UNRWA.

The policy of UNRWA and the Jordanian government was to establish the Palestinian camps in the immediate vicinity of job opportunities, therefore near cities. This was done with the idea that camps could become *'sites of possible improvement'* and that it was easier to achieve good living conditions there.⁵¹ Besides, it was also mentioned in the 1956th *Camp, Site and Layout document* of the UNRWA that the Palestinians preferred these locations around cities.⁵² According to UNRWA's policies, the Jabal al-Husseini camp was located just a few kilometres northwest of the city centre. As shown on the map on the previous page, the camp is completely enclosed by the city. While the borders of the camp are not strictly fixed, Oesch was, through his fieldwork, able to identify some sort of idea of where the camp begins and ends. The boundaries of the camp are mainly visible in the form of streets, such as the Al-Urdon street, which has been there since the 1990's and Yafa street. However, *'in reality the street[s] meanders along the official border, the boundaries of the camp coinciding at some points with the street[s], while at other places lying in retreat of the road or beyond it.'*⁵³ Before the construction of the Al-Urdon road there was hardly any distinction visible between the adjacent neighbourhood Jabal al-Nuzha and the camp, because the condition of Jabal al-Nuzha was deprived as well and its materiality therefore similar.⁵⁴

While there is much unity between the adjacent neighbourhoods and the camp and there are no fences, borders or checkpoints, we can distinguish the camp and the city by looking for differences in the urban fabric on the map. The density of both streets

⁵⁰ Oesch, Lucas. "An Improvised Dispositif: Invisible Urban Planning in the Refugee Camp." *International Journal of Urban and Regional Research* 44, no. 2, 2020: 358.

⁵¹ Berg, Kjersti Gravelsæter. "From chaos to order and back. The construction of UNRWA shelters and camps, 1950–70." *UNRWA and Palestinian Refugees: From Relief and Works to Human Development*, 2014: 245.

⁵² Berg, 2014: 227.

⁵³ Oesch, Lucas. "The urban planning strategy in Al-Husseini Palestinian refugee camp in Amman." In *UNRWA and Palestinian refugees: from relief and works to human development*. 2014: 462.

⁵⁴ Hart, Jason. *"Contested Belonging: Children and Childhood in a Palestinian Refugee Camp in Jordan"*, PhD thesis, London: University of London, 2000: 76.

and buildings is many times bigger in the camp than in its surrounding neighbourhoods. This must be attributed to the impossibility of the camp to expand over land, while there has been a large increase in its population. The urban layout of the camp resembles a kind of grid lay-out. The Ein Jalout street serves as vertical partition, where most of the commercial activities are located. Some 50 smaller streets serve as horizontal directors, where most of the houses are situated. To avoid overcrowded camps the UNRWA divided the camps in relatively big plots of 7.5 by 14 meters.⁵⁵ Yet, UNRWA had learned that if the plots would be even bigger than this, people would start sub-renting parts of their plot to others, which ultimately would lead to more overcrowding. However, overcrowding remains till this day one of the main issues of the Jabal al-Hussein refugee camp and other Palestinian refugee camps alike.

The Jabal al-Hussein camp was set up by UNWRA in 1952 to temporarily accommodate the Palestinian refugees, who were concentrated around the current location of the camp, in tents. Before the official camp was established, the refugees bundled in groups according to pre-1948 Palestine villages and family structures. Most of them were '*jobless farmers and labourers who had not been able to afford any decent lodging*'.⁵⁶ Originally, since the camp was seen as a temporary solution until the Palestinians could return to their homes, the refugees lived in canvas tents or small shelters as we can see on the image on the next page. If the camp were to lose its function when a solution had been found, it would not leave any traces in the landscape because these tents could easily be torn down and the roads hadn't been paved yet. However, we do see some stone buildings appear between the tents. This could be sanitation huts or, if they are shelters, can be perceived as the already decreasing hope of a quick return. It is also striking to see on the picture that the camp was not completely enclosed by the city yet. It resembles the cliché image that people have of a refugee camp with tents on an open field more than the images of the current situation of the camp. '*Infrastructure buildings such as schools, a health centre and a ration distribution centre were set up by UNRWA, while the Jordanian government was, according to the agreement, in charge of other infrastructure, such as the provision of water*'.⁵⁷ As hopes for a quick return of the Palestinians began to fade, it became increasingly clear to UNRWA and the Jordanian government that the condition of the refugees' shelters needed to be improved. In addition, there was a shortage of canvas tents and cold winters were expected. Therefore, tents had to be replaced by more durable shelters. UNWRA's approach for this consisted of hiring local contractors or handing out materials with which the Palestinians could build or improve their shelters themselves. By the end of the 50s, almost all tents had been substituted by small,

⁵⁵ Berg, Kjersti Gravelseter. "From chaos to order and back. The construction of UNRWA shelters and camps, 1950–70." *UNRWA and Palestinian Refugees: From Relief and Works to Human Development*, 2014: 228.

⁵⁶ Al Hussein, Jalal J. "The management of the Palestinian refugee camps in Jordan between logics of integration and exclusion." Available at SSRN 2166837, 2010: 2.

⁵⁷ Oesch, Lucas. "An Improvised Dispositif: Invisible Urban Planning in the Refugee Camp." *International Journal of Urban and Regional Research* 44, no. 2, 2020: 355.



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⁵⁸ van de Poll, Willem. "Overview of the Hussein refugee camp near Amman, with some children and a jeep in the foreground." 1950. Fotocollectie Van de Poll, Nationaal Archief. Accessed February 24, 2021. [https://www.nationaalarchief.nl/onderzoeken/fotocollectie/detail?limitstart=96&q_searchfield=amman&f_Vervaardiger\[0\]=Poll, Willem van de](https://www.nationaalarchief.nl/onderzoeken/fotocollectie/detail?limitstart=96&q_searchfield=amman&f_Vervaardiger[0]=Poll, Willem van de).

⁵⁹ <https://www.facebook.com/Old.photos.Of.Jordan/photos/...>

cement shelters with asbestos or fibrocement roofs.⁶⁰ After all, the houses were still called *ma'wa* or *malja'* (shelter) instead of *bayt* or *dar* (home) and the camps were still referred to as *moukhayyam* (tent camp).⁶¹

In the 60's the camp housed 3721 families in standardised shelters with one or two 12 m² rooms for families of 4-5 members or 6-8 members respectively.^{62 63} At that time, Orientalist Goichon described the camp as '*Well organised. Streets are wide, at least at the entrance. "Village" is the word that comes to mind.*'⁶⁴ When analysing the photo on the previous page taken in 1961, this is an understandable description. A gridded urban layout has arisen and most of the tents are replaced by cement or concrete shelters. This shows that the temporary nature of the camp was no longer self-evident. However, some houses still have tents pitched next to them on the plot. People started building fences of brick around their plots, which can be seen as an appropriation of space and an increased sense of ownership. The small differentiations of the shelters visible in the photo, suggest that not all construction works were executed according to a comprehensive plan. UNWRA already started to see the consequences of the unauthorized building practices of the refugees, because overcrowding and deterioration were a common phenomenon. The Six Day war of 1967 reinforced this with a new wave of refugees, although most of them resided in newly set up camps. Yet there were resources available for development, such as the construction of electricity and water networks.

In the 1970s the concept of temporariness became more and more intricate because on the one hand, the Jordanian government determined that only temporary shelters could be built,⁶⁵ while on the other hand, more and more shelters were constructed in concrete, main streets were asphalted and a sewage system was installed.⁶⁶ When you compare the photo taken in 1961 with the one on the next page from 10 years later, the increased density of the camp is clearly visible. All tents are replaced by shelters and it seems like greenery is planted and growing since the establishment of the camp. However, it is visible that people still expand their shelters only in a horizontal way and that they don't break the rule of the maximum of one floor, set by the DPA.⁶⁷

⁶⁰ Goichon, Amélie-Marie. "Les réfugiés palestiniens en Jordanie". *Esprit* 7, 1964: 171.

⁶¹ Al Hussein, Jalal J. "*The management of the Palestinian refugee camps in Jordan between logics of integration and exclusion.*" Available at SSRN 2166837, 2010: 9.

⁶² Goichon, 1964: 172.

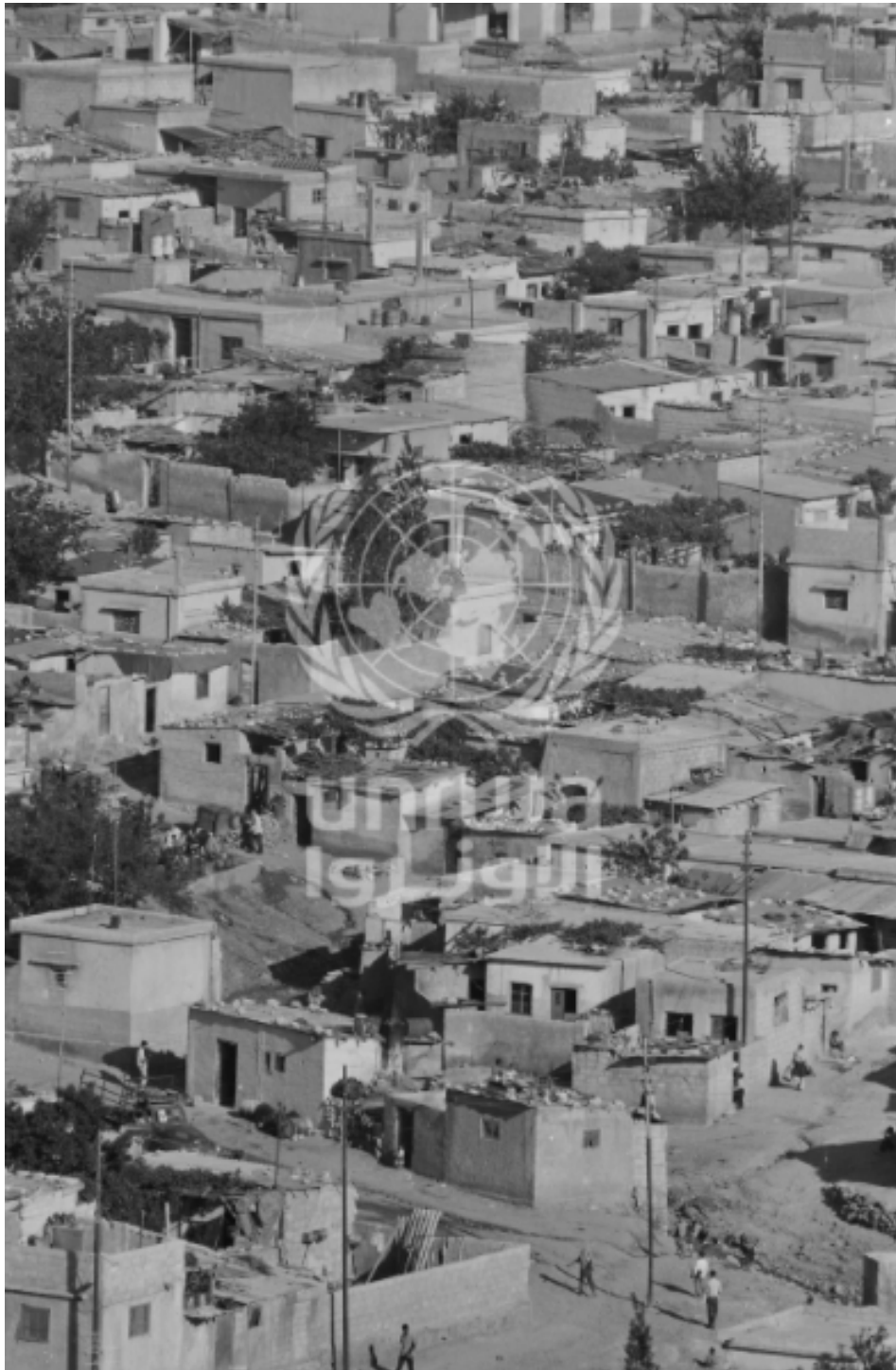
⁶³ Al Hussein, 9.

⁶⁴ Goichon, 1964: 172. translated by: Oesch, Lucas. "The urban planning strategy in Al-Hussein Palestinian refugee camp in Amman." In *UNRWA and Palestinian refugees: from relief and works to human development*. 2014: 466.

⁶⁵ Berg, Kjersti Gravelsæter. "From chaos to order and back. The construction of UNRWA shelters and camps, 1950–70." *UNRWA and Palestinian Refugees: From Relief and Works to Human Development*, 2014: 241.

⁶⁶ Oesch, Lucas. "The urban planning strategy in Al-Hussein Palestinian refugee camp in Amman." In *UNRWA and Palestinian refugees: from relief and works to human development*. 2014: 476.

⁶⁷ Jaber, Hana. "Le camp de Wihdat, entre norme et transgression." *Revue d'études palestiniennes* 8, 1996: 39.



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⁶⁸ "Aerial View of Jabal El-Hussein Camp." 1971. Refugee Life Conditions, UNRWA. In *UNRWA Archives*. August 6, 2017. Accessed March 14, 2021. https://unrwa.photoshelter.com/galleries/C0000g3o.R_mVIOQ/G00006rFj_S6W7Jo/I0000.5Qu.DYiJXU/Refugee-Conditions.



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⁶⁹ "A Glimpse of Jabal El-Hussein Palestinian Refugee Camp, Jordan." 1980s. The Palestine Red Crescent Society (PRCS) Collection, The Palestinian Museum. In Digital Archive Palestinian Museum. Accessed March 14, 2021. <https://palarchive.org/item/135226/a-glimpse-of-jabal-el-hussein-palestinian-refugee-camp-jordan/>.

⁷⁰ "A Glimpse of Jabal El-Hussein Palestinian Refugee Camp, Jordan." 1980s. The Palestine Red Crescent Society (PRCS) Collection, The Palestinian Museum. In Digital Archive Palestinian Museum. Accessed March 14, 2021 <https://palarchive.org/item/135221/a-glimpse-of-jabal-el-hussein-palestinian-refugee-camp-jordan/>

In contrast, the photos on the previous page show that in the 80's people had built extra floors on top of their houses, showing an even further decrease of the camps temporal character. Not only the refugees started seriously improving their living conditions, but also the government officially started including refugee camps in urban plans for the first time, together with other deprived neighbourhoods.⁷¹ This was done by the Urban Development Department (UDD), later known as the HUDC. These improvements were the result of the social safety net that the Jordan government had set up after the economic crisis of the 1980s.⁷² The increase in the sense of ownership and appropriation of space is again visible, when looking at the shelters. The Palestinians are colouring their shelter's facades to give a sense of identity to their houses. The involvement of the camps in official urban plans of the HUDC could be seen as the moment from which the camps stopped being extra territorial, as mentioned by Ababsa.⁷³

The Wadi Araba Treaty in 1994, which reduced the prospect of repatriation of the Palestinians, caused an even greater focus on development of the camps. Large developments were executed in the Jabal al-Hussein camp in terms of infrastructure by the DPA and UNRWA. After a survey Abu Helwa and Birch concluded that '*refugee housing differs little from the rest of Amman's housing*'.^{74 75} For example, almost all houses had connection to water and sewerage.⁷⁶ The same survey showed that half of the 1.970 houses, which were there at that time, had been extended by the refugees, with an average enlargement of 28%.⁷⁷ Besides shelter improvement, there was also a lot of infrastructure development done at that time. The largest construction project was the construction of the Al-Urdon road, which is located on the border of the camp. The construction of the road had been planned for 40 years, but because it was to be located alongside the camp, the start of construction was postponed many times. It was thought that if a solution would be found to the Palestinian 'problem' and the camp would be torn down, it would be easier to build the road. When finding a solution for the Palestinians and dismantling the camp seemed less and less likely, the municipality decided to build the road anyway. After the construction of the road, some 30 houses along both sides the of the road were renovated by the Arab Women Organization of Jordan (AWOJ), with approval of the DPA.⁷⁸

Since the turn of the century there has been a big shift towards community

⁷¹ Oesch, Lucas. "An Improvised Dispositif: Invisible Urban Planning in the Refugee Camp." *International Journal of Urban and Regional Research* 44, no. 2, 2020: 355.

⁷² Oesch, Lucas. "The urban planning strategy in Al-Hussein Palestinian refugee camp in Amman." In *UNRWA and Palestinian refugees: from relief and works to human development*. 2014: 481.

⁷³ Ababsa, Myriam. "Citizenship and Urban Issues in Jordan." *Cities, urban practices and nation building in Jordan*, 2011: 52.

⁷⁴ Abu Helwa, Mussallam, Birch, Brian. "The demography and housing conditions of Palestinian refugees in and around the camps in Amman, Jordan." *Journal of Refugee Studies* 6, no. 4, 1993: 403-413.

⁷⁵ Oesch, 2014: 466.

⁷⁶ Department of Palestinian Affairs. "*The Annual Report, Amman: Department of Palestinian Affairs*", The Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan. 1997: 25.

⁷⁷ Abu Helwa, Birch, 403-413.

⁷⁸ Oesch, 2014: 480.



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⁷⁹ Oesch, Lucas. "Another View of the Al-Hussein Camp. In the Foreground, a Stair Alley and Shelters; in the Background, the Adjacent Neighbourhood of Al-Nuzha." 2006. In *An Improvised Dispositif: Invisible Urban Planning in the Refugee Camp.* International Journal of Urban and Regional Research 44, no. 2, 2020: 357.

driven development in the housing policies of the UNRWA and the Jordan government, due to the 2004 Geneva Conference. This conference acknowledged that the improvement of the refugee camps should not stand in the way of the 'right to return'.⁸⁰ Therefore development projects were widely embraced and UNWRA set up the Infrastructure and Camp Improvement Programme (ICIP) aiming to '*work towards the integrated, developmental, participatory and community-driven improvement of the built environment of the camps. ... [The] ICIP uses the tools and methodologies of urban planning as the proven best practice that can enable the Agency to operate holistically at an urban scale (compared to the previous sectoral framework) and tackle the contemporary urban complexities that mark Palestine refugees' camps.*'⁸¹ This caused reconsiderations of what temporariness means for refugee camps.⁸² This is visible on the photo on the previous page which shows that nowadays people have built up to 5 stories high. It is clear that the urbanisation process of the camp, has now made it look similar to its adjacent neighbourhood, Al-Nuzha. The buildings in both areas have quite the same colours, heights and density. This proves that since some years, the temporariness of the camp has become inferior to the need of improving the living conditions of the refugees. The new plans of UNWRA not only focused on housing, but also on setting up public spaces, planting trees and on the improvement of the upgrading of circulation in and around the camp. Despite the efforts, a study from 2002 still labelled the houses in the Jordan camps as substandard in terms of construction materials, overcrowding and infrastructure connections such as potable water and sewerage.⁸³

For more than 70 years the Jabal al-Hussein camp has been seen as a temporary, exceptional space, but this temporariness has evolved over time from temporary, to semi-temporary, to temporary-permanent.⁸⁴ The tension between the temporality of the camp, being the spatial archive of the 'right to return', and the materiality of the camp, being a space where people live, has caused difficulties in the ambiguous urbanisation process of the camp. On the one hand, this process had to be improvised, purely humanitarian and unplanned to guarantee the camps exceptional character, while on the other hand it needed development and guidance. '*In the Al-Hussein camp, improvement was, by contrast, disconnected from development, and attached to what is often presented as its opposite, namely humanitarianism, although research has pointed to the somewhat artificial and instrumental division between the two notions and their corresponding practices.*'⁸⁵ As time went by, especially after the 2004 Geneva conference, the UNRWA started regulating the camp more intensely, which gave the Agency the notion of a quasi-governmental institute or substitute state.

⁸⁰ Budeiri, Muna. "Dynamics of Space, Temporariness, Development and Rights in Palestine Refugees' Camps." In *UNRWA and Palestinian refugees: From relief and works to human development*. Routledge NY, 2014: 378.

⁸¹ Budeiri, 2014: 378-380.

⁸² Oesch, Lucas. "An Improvised Dispositif: Invisible Urban Planning in the Refugee Camp." *International Journal of Urban and Regional Research* 44, no. 2, 2020: 356.

⁸³ Khawaja, Marwan, and Age A. Tiltne, eds. "*On the margins: migration and living conditions of Palestinian camp refugees in Jordan.*" Fafo, Institute for Applied Social Science, 2002: 138.

⁸⁴ Budeiri, 2014: 372.

⁸⁵ Oesch, 2020, 361.

This caused an urge to reconceptualize the 'refugee camp'. After this genealogical study on the development of the Jabal al-Hussein camp, the next chapter will try make a start with the reconceptualization of the refugee camp by connecting the findings of this chapter with the theoretical and historical framework of refugee camps.

RECONCEPTUALISING REFUGEE CAMPS

If we would return to the definition of a camp of containment which is '*spatially bounded ..., temporally limited ..., biopolitical ..., and segregates residents from a surrounding population by formal or informal restrictions*', it can be argued that the Jabal al-Hussein refugee camp is not only a temporary space in 'state of exclusion', accommodating the 'bare life', but rather a space of inclusion, permanent temporariness and identity.⁸⁶

The notion that the refugees are living a 'bare life' in the Jordan camps is easily ruled out, since the Palestinians gained Jordan citizenship not long after their arrival in the country. This citizenship is considered full, with all its rights and duties and brought the refugees '*within a web of formal and informal balancing mechanisms of inclusion/exclusion meant to guarantee their integration within Jordan's society while preserving their right of return*'.⁸⁷

Despite the fact that the Jordanian government frequently pronounced the Palestinians' dual refugee-citizen status, this doesn't mean that there is no exclusion or discrimination towards the Palestinians and therefore, Oesch argues that we should '*move beyond this clear-cut opposition, [of refugee and citizen] and understand the creation of a zone of indistinction between exclusion and inclusion in the camp as a deliberate politics of ambiguity*'.⁸⁸ This ambiguity shows itself in the fact that both the Jordan government and UNRWA are responsible for the Palestinian refugees, making the camps both national and international territories. This paradoxical situation cannot be put to an end, as the Jordan government has states repeatedly, since UNRWA's involvement safeguards the refugees' political stakes. However, UNRWA appears to take over some of the governmental tasks and is sometimes even considered as a 'quasi-state'.⁸⁹ This is exemplified by the many blue UN flags visible in the camp and the fact that UNRWA provides things like community services, education and food for those in need, takes care of shelter improvements, updates family records and even collects garbage. Still UNRWA argues, and they have to do so to retain their funds, that the

⁸⁶ McConnachie, Kirsten. "Camps of containment: A genealogy of the refugee camp." *Humanity: An International Journal of Human Rights, Humanitarianism, and Development* 7, no. 3, 2016: 399.

⁸⁷ Al Hussein, Jalal J. "*The management of the Palestinian refugee camps in Jordan between logics of integration and exclusion*." Available at SSRN 2166837, 2010: 1.

⁸⁸ Oesch, Lucas. "The refugee camp as a space of multiple ambiguities and subjectivities." *Political Geography* 60, 2017: 111.

⁸⁹ Oesch, 2017: 113.

camps '*are not extra-territorial areas under United Nations jurisdiction*'.⁹⁰ So, for both UNRWA, the Jordan government and the refugees, the exceptional character of the camps has to be retained. Whether that is in its juridical practice or temporality differs in time and for involved actor.

The Palestinian refugee camps also form an example for the ambiguity concerning the temporariness of refugee camps. On the one hand this temporariness can be defined by its importance for the 'right to return'. On the other hand, it is characterized by its materiality and built environment. Furthermore, different actors are involved, such as the refugees, the host countries, UNRWA and others, all with their own perspectives on the meaning of temporariness. Since these perspectives change over time and this dynamic process determines the state of the camp, the camp can never be considered as something static. It should rather be viewed upon as a fluid entity. According to Jamal, the Palestinian perspective has undergone three phases: '*temporal temporariness*', '*protracted temporariness*' and '*normal temporariness*'.⁹¹

At the commencement of the Jabal al-Hussein camp, all perspectives of the different actors endorsed the pure temporary character of the camp. Nevertheless, it was only there until a solution was found for the Arab/Israeli conflict. The land on which the camp was built was hired to the Jordan government by private landowners and to present day, this remains to be the case. This creates another paradox of the camp. Namely, the camp inhabitants own the houses that they live in, '*but not the land on which they are built*'.⁹² Despite this fact, from the 1960s onwards the refugees started to rent parts over their plot or extra rooms to others. That created a heterogeneous population with other marginalized people who sought cheap living space in the camp, such as refugees from other middle eastern countries or low-class Jordanians. Since the camp is currently located in the middle of the Amman, its land price has increased rapidly.

In the beginning, the type of shelters - which were tents back then - also embodied the temporality of the camp. Since this temporality had a political meaning, it was not easy to replace the tents with the first real shelters, being constructed with cement or bricks. As time went by and the perspectives shifted towards 'protracted temporariness' the Palestinians were more willing to upgrade their shelters. However, while new additions were made to the shelters, the temporary aesthetics remained the norm and most additions were done horizontally. Walls were left unfinished and steel frames sprouted out of the concrete roofs, which gave the camp a makeshift character.⁹³ Because the DPA did not take strong measures against these building practices, it

⁹⁰ UNRWA, "*Report of the Director of the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestinian Refugees in the Near East*", 1 July 1971–30 June 1972, Supplement no.13 (A/8713), New York, 1972: 4.

⁹¹ Jamal, Amal. "The struggle for time and the power of temporariness: Jews and Palestinians in the labyrinth of history." *Men in the Sun*, 2009: 23.

⁹² Oesch, Lucas. "The refugee camp as a space of multiple ambiguities and subjectivities." *Political Geography* 60, 2017: 113.

⁹³ Oesch, Lucas. "The politics of temporariness and the materiality of refugee camps." In *Arrival Infrastructures*, Palgrave Macmillan, Cham, 2019: 240.

appears that the perspective of the Jordanian government had also changed. While the camp urbanized and is now barely distinct from its adjacent neighbourhoods, it is argued that the camp is temporary in its political status, but more permanent in its materiality.⁹⁴ The temporality of the camp can therefore also be seen as a '*instrument of resistance*'.⁹⁵

The time dimension of the camp is not only a political tool in the service of the right to return, but its outcome in the materiality of the camp, for example the building of concrete shelters, can also show a certain permanence, identity, agency or as a UN official described it after visiting the Irbid camp in 2008: '*the real face of Palestine outside Palestine*'.⁹⁶ After some years, while the camp was still being considered a place in-between two situations and its inhabitants as a passive and static population, the Palestinians started creating their own Palestine in the camps. New relations appeared and grew organically. The camp turned into a space '*in which a Palestinian national identity might be produced, reproduced, mobilised and organised*'.⁹⁷

Although the camp remains temporary in a political context, the Palestinians have, in fits and starts, appropriated their shelter, neighbourhood and camp. They have built and rebuilt their houses, organized themselves and are socially connected with the other inhabitants of the camp. The building processes in the camp were in need of new associations like '*the popular committees, the maintenance committees, the neighbourhood groupings and so on*'.⁹⁸ In addition, there were also other movements of life that stimulated the growth of these interactions, like economic and political activities. These '*identities have formed not only on the level of the camp, but also on the level of the neighbourhood and building block*'.⁹⁹ These complex identities again provided a stronger sense of belonging for the Palestinians. Hence, it is argued that the '*camp is the people within it and the relations between them: the space and the society are one formation, a 'camp society*'.¹⁰⁰ This society shows its identity in a material way. Outside, murals and flags embellish the streets, while inside Palestinian maps, pictures of important people and Islamic verses are hung on the shelters' walls. This turns the camps into a material symbol itself. The symbol of resilience, resisting oblivion. This Palestinian identity is reinforced by the fact that there is a 'clearly' demarcated territory for their place of exile. '*The territorial boundary of the camp becomes a significant,*

⁹⁴ Destremau, Blandine. "Les camps de réfugiés palestiniens et la ville: entre enclave et quartier." Amman, ville et société, 1996.

⁹⁵ Jamal, Amal. "Conflict Theory, Temporality, and Transformative Temporariness: Lessons from Israel and Palestine." *Constellations* 23, no. 3, 2016, 336.

⁹⁶ Al Hussein, Jalal J. "The management of the Palestinian refugee camps in Jordan between logics of integration and exclusion." Available at SSRN 2166837, 2010: 4.

⁹⁷ Ramadan, Adam. "Spatialising the refugee camp." *Transactions of the Institute of British Geographers* 38, no. 1, 2013: 70.

⁹⁸ Abourahme, Nasser. "Assembling and spilling-over: towards an 'ethnography of cement' in a Palestinian refugee camp." *International Journal of Urban and Regional Research* 39, no. 2, 2015: 212.

⁹⁹ Misselwitz, Philipp, and Sari Hanafi. "Testing a new paradigm: UNRWA's camp improvement programme." *Refugee Survey Quarterly* 28, no. 2-3, 2009: 373.

¹⁰⁰ Ramadan, 70.

*if not the only, marker for delineating 'us' and 'them.'*¹⁰¹ Yet, there is daily circulation between the camp and the 'outside'. New people are moving into the camps, city-dwellers come to do their groceries in the camp due to lower prices and camp-dwellers seek jobs outside of the camp's borders. Internal circulation in the camp has even caused segregation as the northern part of the camp is inhabited by more prosperous Palestinians.¹⁰² The inevitable consequences of everyday life, which are clearly present in the camps, redefine the political significance of the camp. These consequences should not be seen in isolation from geopolitics, as they are entwined in multiple ways.¹⁰³

CONCLUSION

By analysing the urbanisation process of the Jabal Al-Hussein camp in Amman, Jordan, in both its materiality and governmentality, this thesis has shown that a refugee camp is not implicitly a 'space of exception' in which the 'bare life' exists, as Agamben states. The first chapter already showed that some scholars, like Schiocchet and Grbac researched this in juridical-political way, but the materiality of the camp was often missing in these studies. In the second chapter the differences and similarities between different kinds of camps are compared, which does show the exceptional character of the camp, but also makes one wonder whether a camp is the right solution for mass migrations and refugees. The actual materiality of the Jabal Al-Hussein camp was researched in the third chapter. This showed that the camp is rather an ambiguous entity. Firstly, being both integrated in and excluded from the urban context of Amman and secondly being under the mandate of both the UNRWA and the Jordan government. Despite of this ambiguous character and the multiple actors involved, the camp and its dwellers have shown a sense of resistance against poor living conditions, which resulted in the improvement of the camp. These improvements ultimately challenged the camps temporality. Vice versa it were also the changing perspectives of the temporality that made the urbanisation process possible. While the Palestinians were living in tents for most of the first decade after the establishment of the camp, they now live in a fully developed 'neighbourhood' which is barely distinguishable from adjacent neighbourhoods. Since there are no strict borders of the camp in the form of fences, walls or checkpoints and it naturally flows over into other neighbourhoods, there has been a lot of circulation between the camp and the city. Because the camp refugees are not being separated, it can even be questioned if the refugee camp is still even a camp of containment, like described by McConnahie. The question arises why

¹⁰¹ Bashford, Alison ; Strange, Carolyn. "Palestinian Refugee Camps: Reinscribing and Contesting Memory and Space: Randa Farah." In *Isolation*, Routledge, 2003: 187.

¹⁰² Oesch, Lucas. "The refugee camp as a space of multiple ambiguities and subjectivities." *Political Geography* 60, 2017: 115.

¹⁰³ Pain, Rachel, and Susan Smith, eds. *Fear: Critical geopolitics and everyday life*. Ashgate Publishing, Ltd., 2008: 7

this symbolic and political meaning of the camp remains intact, while this prevents the camp from developing in such a way that the lives of its inhabitants are more bearable. Why is there a politics in the suffering of people, as beautifully expressed in the title of Peteets book. Serious problems, affecting lives of thousands of people around the world, command us to reconsider the role of the refugee camps. Therefore, the fourth chapter carefully started with reconceptualising the Palestinian refugee camps. On the one hand, refugee camps remain spatially bounded, biopolitical and temporary but on the other hand it is none of this at all. More research must be done about the future conceptualisation, set up and of governance of refugee camps.

This research clearly illustrated by looking at the material development of the Jabal al-Husseini refugee camp that the temporariness of refugee camps is not a fixed state of being, but changes over times and consequently makes the camp into a fluid entity. This raises the question in the way we deal with refugees, as 'citizens-in-waiting'.¹⁰⁴ Based on these conclusions, practitioners should consider to reconceptualise the refugee camp, but first further research into the materiality of different refugee camps around the world is needed. In addition, depending on the results, these studies must contribute to the development that has already been set in motion at UNHCR, whereby the camp is no longer seen as the ultimate solution to the refugee problem.

For the different actors, like the Palestinians, the Jordan government and the UNRWA, the camps need to be a 'space of exception', to remain the symbolic reference of the unresolved 'Palestinian question', but at the same time it needs to be a decent living space. Yet it can be argued that no 'bare life' exists in it, only real life.

¹⁰⁴ Oesch, Lucas. "The politics of temporariness and the materiality of refugee camps." In *Arrival Infrastructures*, Palgrave Macmillan, Cham, 2019: 231.

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