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The 'Where' of Sovereign Power and Exception. Palestinian Life and Refugee Camps in Lebanon

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Palestinian Life and Refugee Camps in Lebanon

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Abstract

This thesis focuses on the Palestinian refugees' experience in Lebanon since 1948, to critically engage with Agamben's theory of exception. Agamben conceives of the 'camp' as the space where the normal juridical order and the inhabitants' rights are suspended, the hidden matrix of the modern where the sovereign confronts nothing but bare life. Refugees are framed as the ultimate embodiment of bare life, a life stripped of rights and protection and at the mercy of state authorities. This research critiques this understanding in three ways.

Firstly, by disenfranchising the concept of sovereign power from statehood, I adopt a multiscalar approach to uncover the complex network of sovereigns and decisions impacting upon the Palestinian life. From the international level (UN and humanitarian organisations) to the regional level (Arab states and Lebanon), I discuss the roles and responsibility of multiple actors in the production of Palestinian bare life showing the global scope of sovereign power. Secondly, by disengaging the concept of power from political institutions, I include the Palestinian refugees' agency in the chessboard of power relations. Focusing on lived experiences and critically engaging with state-centric and law-centric perspectives, the thesis uncovers the micropolitics on the ground constituted by multiple forms of resistance that refugees adopt in their ongoing struggles for survival and recognition. The recognition of this agency and political significance of refugees' lives is paramount if a just solution to the Palestinian refugee question is to be found. Finally, this study interrogates and problematises the uncritical assimilation of refugee camps to spaces of exception. By looking at the evolution of Shatila refugee camp and its relation to the city of Beirut, I discuss the formation of a new spatial model that I call 'campscape'. As social and spatial boundaries increasingly blur, the 'campscape', which includes the refugee camp and informal settlements around, is the space in which the refugee meets the other outcasts of the Lebanese political and economic system.

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List of abbreviations

AFSC – American Friends Service Committee

ANM – Arab Nationalist Movement

DFLP – Democratic Front for the Liberation of Palestine

EAFORD – The International Organisation for the Elimination of all Forms of Racial Discrimination

FCO – British Foreign & Commonwealth Office

FMO – Forced Migration Online

FO – Foreign Office

ICRC – International Committee of the Red Cross

LBC – Lebanese Broadcasting Corporation

LNM – Lebnaese National Movement

LRCS – League of the Red Cross Societies

PFLP – Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine

PLO – Palestinian Liberation Organisation

PNF – Palestinian National Fund

POW – Prisoner of War

PRCS – Palestinian Red Crescent Society

PRM – Palestinian Resistance Movement

UAR – United Arab Republic

UNCCP – United Nations Conciliation Commission for Palestine

UNHCR – United Nations Higg Commisioner for Refugees

UNRPR – United Nations Relief Palestine Refugees

UNRWA – United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East

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Introduction

As a result of the spiral of violence and war that took place in Palestine between November 1947 – following the issue of the United Nations partition plan through General Assembly Resolution 181(II) – and November 1948, more than 750,000 Palestinians fled or were expelled from their homes and villages.[1] The inability to peacefully resolve the first Arab-Israeli conflict and find a suitable solution for the thousands of displaced had, and still has, major consequences for the refugees of the Nakba and their descendants. An Arabic word that literally means 'catastrophe', Nakba refers to the Palestinian 'catastrophe' of 1948 in which thousands of Palestinians lost their homes and have been displaced and scattered mostly beyond Israel's boundaries with no chance of returning to their villages. It implies not only the loss of their land and nationality, but also meant separation from families and their beloved.

For a long time Palestinians have been waiting for the implementation of the right of return sanctioned by General Assembly Resolution 194 of December 11, 1948, as well as for their rights as citizens to be reconstituted as nationals of a Palestinian state.[2] Awaiting the solution to their predicament, the Palestinian refugees have certainly been pawns of certain states' interests – of the Middle East region as well as beyond it – unresolved Arab-Israeli conflicts and tensions, and inconclusive diplomacy for which the international community[3] should and must be accounted for too.

Denied the right of return to their homes and villages because of Israel's refusal to accept the refugees back on the ground that the Jewish state had no responsibility for their 'voluntary migration', the Palestinians found themselves guests of different Arab states that alternated a welcoming and benevolent hospitality with harsh and confrontational relations (Takkenberg, 1998). The bareness of their life, as Agamben (1995a, 1998) would

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[1] For the full text of the Resolution, see the United Nations website at http://www.un.org/documents/resga.htm (last accessed August 2011).

[2] Ibid.

[3] The use of this expression may be an epistemological trap as it leads to generalisations. As Campbell (1998a: 221) affirms, 'to speak in terms of "the international community" is to overlook the significant differences between "its" members and constitute[s] an agent of dubious unity'. Whilst referring to the case of Bosnia and the ways in which external actors addressed the conflict in Bosnia politically, mediatically and strategically, the use of the expression 'international community' was still appropriate as 'given the dominance of a shared political anthropology concerning Bosnia, the commonalities of the imagined community of international society are more important than the tactical differences'. The same applies to Palestine: given the commonalities in different states' decisions and opinions as regards the question of Palestine, these supersede 'tactical differences'.

argue, was soon manifested by their being *de facto* and *de jure* stateless, and at the mercy of their hosts' moods and the availability of humanitarian aid. Indeed, the main hosting countries – Jordan, Lebanon, and Syria – never felt responsible for the Palestinians' displacement. As a consequence, relief and assistance was left in the sole hands of humanitarian organisations such as the Red Cross first and UNRWA (United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East) later. Focusing on the refugees' survival, however, these agencies are not able to grant them a qualified and political life or any legal protection.

While the treatment reserved for the Palestinians in each country has been different and varied according to historical moments and states' interests, among the main Arab countries that have since 1948 hosted the refugees, Lebanon is the one in which they found the harshest situation. Mainly, but not exclusively, due to the peculiar confessional character of Lebanese politics and society that among the countries of the Middle East registers the highest number of Christians, the presence of a mostly Muslim refugee community constituting about ten percent of the total population has always been perceived as a potential and major destabilising force (Farsoun and Zacharia, 1997). For these reasons, and with the aim of maintaining the fragile political *status quo* of the country, Palestinian refugees in Lebanon have endured harsh repression. The unwillingness of the Lebanese government to naturalise them soon materialised in the refugees' spatial segregation through the establishment of refugee camps and the issue of discriminatory laws, decrees and orders that exclude the refugees from rights guaranteed to Lebanese citizens. The rejection of *tawtin* (settlement and naturalisation of the Palestinian refugees) has always been used to justify and 'legalise' such discriminatory practices.

Given the all encompassing marginalisation that the Palestinian refugees face in Lebanon, the aim of this research is to uncover their predicament while stressing the urgency for a solution to their condition. Almost on a daily basis through the media we, in the West, witness the violence of the Israeli occupation in the West Bank or multiple sieges of and blockages on the Gaza Strip. Less often we know and hear about stories, experiences and how the Palestinian everyday life is lived beyond the West Bank, Gaza and Israel. Palestinians who no longer can touch the Palestinian lost and occupied lands are too often overlooked and forgotten, even media reports with their emphasis on the Occupied Territories seem to 'over-reflect' the pace and direction of the failed Peace Process. Officially commenced about twenty years ago with the Madrid Peace Conference in 1991, negotiations held by Israeli and Palestinian delegations have often been stalled

and, when resumed, have always proved unsuccessful and inconclusive. Never properly addressed, the refugee issue has since then been postponed leaving refugees outside Israel and the Occupied Territories to face alone their everyday struggles and deprivation. Moreover, the recent Palestinian bid for statehood would further cast a shadow on the future of the diasporic Palestinians who still hope for the right of return to be implemented. If the Palestinian Authority were guaranteed full membership in the UN as a sovereign state, the Palestine Liberation Organisation's (hereafter PLO) observer status would disappear and with it the formal representation in the international fora of all the Palestinians no matter where they live. Despite promises that the 1948 refugees and their descendants would not be forgotten, diasporic Palestinians fear oblivion. Their removal from the negotiations table might represent the highest price that the Palestinian delegation would be ready to pay in the 'land for peace' deal.[4]

It is beyond the scope of this study to engage in a discussion and analysis of the Peace Process itself. Yet, it is pressing and paramount to uncover the everyday life of diasporic Palestinian refugees in order to not forget of their existence and their political significance. In offering a contribution to the disciplines of Geography and Refugee Studies, this research aims at revealing the net of complex (local and global) power relations in which Palestinian refugees, especially those living in Lebanon, are caught.

Theoretical premises and questions: Agamben and beyond

At the beginning of this research, my understanding of the Palestinian life and refugee camps in Lebanon drew heavily on Agamben's (1995a, 1998, 2001, 2005a) reflections on the 'exception', the 'camp', 'sovereign power' and 'bare life'. This was also reinforced by a literature that, while focusing on displacement and understanding power in terms of law and rights, constantly referred to refugees and asylum seekers as 'bare life' while refugee camps and detention centres were seen as 'spaces of exception' where inmates' and inhabitants' lives are at the mercy of state authorities and their arbitrary decisions. Although Agamben is not explicit in identifying sovereign power with the state, his focus on law and on a sovereign that produces law does not leave much scope for other kinds of interpretations.

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[4] On 15th September 2011, in an interview with *The Daily Star* (Lebanese newspaper), the Palestinian ambassador to Lebanon, Abdullah Abdullah, affirmed that Palestinian refugees living in Lebanon would not be granted citizenship automatically in the eventuality the Palestinian bid for statehood proved successful. See in the newspapers and online articles section of bibliography Slemrod, 2011.

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Agamben's work has been widely referenced when investigating the condition of refugees, immigrants or asylum seekers. Yet, his reflections have also prompted critiques. If in 2006 Ek (2006: 370) suggested that Agamben's insights may have found applicability in the social sciences and humanities in relation to situations experienced by refugees as well as asylum seekers, he also reminded us that the applicability of Agamben's notion of exception and bare life is not universal. Agamben's legal approach that pivots around the triangle composed of law, politics and life tends to identify the sovereign with the state, in this way, missing other kinds of power relations. But is the state the sole and undisputed sovereign that affects refugees' lives? In the context of the Palestinian refugees in Lebanon, is Lebanon solely responsible for the production of the Palestinian bare life? Was it Lebanon that originally stripped the Palestinians of their rights? Is Lebanon the one preventing the solution of the refugee issue and the peace process in the Middle East today?

This research is situated within a literature that, while engaging with Agamben's theories, investigates the refugee condition and spaces. While building a critique of Agamben (and scholars that so heavily relied on the notions of sovereign power and bare life in uncritical state-centric ways), this study moves on two different levels. On the one hand, as this use and understanding of Agamben's work overlooks the significance and the reach of sovereign power that moves at different scales, this research explores the multiplicity of sovereigns and decisions affecting Palestinian life. On the other hand, I contend that state-centric approaches and investigations exclusively based on law and rights prevent us from recognising lived experiences. In other words, a state-centric and law-centric approach would under-play the macropolitics operating on the global scale as well as the micropolitics on the ground constituted by multiple and micro forms of resistance displayed by refugees in their ongoing struggles.

Certainly, the ways in which Palestinian refugees have been treated in Lebanon since their arrival may at first glance justify the use of a literature that identifies power with the state's policies and practices, and bare life with the refugee. In Lebanon, Palestinians have been facing the harshest social, economic and spatial marginalisation when compared to other countries hosting the Palestinians (Syria and Jordan). They have been prevented from working, using public services, and have been spatially marginalised by means of the refugee camp. Whereas one of the main reasons for the refugees' predicament in Lebanon is certainly rooted in the peculiarity of Lebanese society and political system based on a power-sharing formula among the different religious

communities, it is also true that an important role in the production of the Palestinian bare life has been played by actors other than Lebanon, and events or decisions occurring beyond its boundaries at the regional and international levels. These deeply influenced the Lebanese attitude and policies towards the refugees. Sovereignty, in fact, is external and internal. It operates on the global level where other actors (other states as well as suprastate organisations) are also masters of decisions (Connolly, 2005, 2007; Hardt and Negri, 2000). But it also works inwards as state's authority is performed over its citizens and residents while control over the state's territory is formally unchallenged.

In order to question the assumption that sovereign power is embodied by the state and that it must be identified with the official realm of politics, this research broadens the scope of enquiry to include multiple actors (and indeed multiple sovereigns) that through their agency operate within the landscape of power relations. Firstly, by adopting a multiscalar approach (that includes the international, regional, national level, but also the level of the individual), this study uncovers the ways in which sovereign power operates and the ways in which different actors might affect the Palestinians' lives in Lebanon. Although this work does not intend by any means to justify the Palestinians' discrimination in Lebanon, in the denunciation of the ongoing oppression, it seeks to contextualise the perpetrated physical and political violence that the Palestinian people have been enduring in the country since 1948. Where are decisions rendering the Palestinian life bare life taken? Who is responsible for their marginalisation?

The second contribution of this research is the inclusion of the refugees' agency within the landscape of power relations. Although Agamben's theories may be useful to investigate the juridical status of refugees and their spaces of references, they fail to explain and take into consideration everyday struggles and forms of resistance. Agamben, in particular, places the prerogative of the decision over the political and juridical value of lives in the solely hands of the sovereign. Moreover, although his take on politics pivots around life as object of power – therefore politics turns into biopolitics – he seems to overlook life itself. As he examines the technologies of a power that is obsessed with lives and forms of life, he neglects to consider processes and transformations occurring beyond the realm of law. As Foucault (1997: 300) argued:

If you try to analyse power not on the basis of freedom, strategies and governmentality, but on the basis of the political institution,

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> you can only conceive of the subject as a subject of law. One then
> has a subject who has or does not have rights, who has had these
> rights either granted or removed by the institution of political
> society; and all this brings us back to a legal concept of the subject.

By reducing the figure of the refugee to a 'mere biological life' stripped of rights, Agamben seems not to recognise the agency of those affected by the sovereign decision. Extending this point, he, therefore, misses the complexities of power relations and forms of resistance (from the most spectacular to the most ordinary) enacted by the refugees and ordinary people. While respecting their predicament, this study intends to reject the uncritical victimisation of the Palestinians and embraces an analysis of the ways in which the refugees may resist and challenge the sovereigns' decision. Considerations that would, indeed, be critical in view of future negotiations between Israel and the Palestinians, the birth of a Palestinian state and potential consequences in missing the political value of Palestinian life beyond Palestine.

Moreover, in addressing the spatialisation of techniques of power, this study critically engages with Agamben's (1995a, 1998) logic of the camp. According to him, the camp is the site in which the normal juridical order is suspended. By virtue of the deactivation of all legal determinations, the camp becomes the space in which everything – including arbitrary violence – becomes possible. Reflecting on the Nazi concentration camp, Agamben urges us to recognise the logic of the camp in the production of structures that aim to enclose the political and biological threat that today is mostly represented by those who cannot be integrated in the nation and constitute a security threat for the state. As Agamben, and before him Hannah Arendt (1968), suggested that the most unprotected figure of our times is the refugee since the lack of state protection renders him/her bare life, many have argued that the logic of the camp must be recognised in the proliferation of spaces of exception such as refugee camps and detention centres. These structures, geared at enclosing the undesired and separating them from the nation, are conceived as temporary locations. While this view, to some extent could be accepted as regards detention centres that temporarily host asylum seekers and immigrants before these are expelled from the country, this perspective seems lacking consistency in the case of refugee camps. As the population of detention centres is ever changing, the one inhabiting refugee camps is fated to live within these sites until a solution to their displacement and statelessness is found.

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The case of the Palestinian refugees and their camps challenges the temporary character of such structures. Born as spaces that contribute to freezing the refugees' status and lives, refugee camps are sites in which the refugees await repatriation, naturalisation in the host country or resettlement in a third country. Yet, as Agier (2011) maintains, these sites are increasingly becoming the fourth solution to the refugee problem. After repatriation, naturalisation or resettlement, the camp, from a temporary solution and because of their prolonged existence, turns into a permanent temporariness or, in Bauman's (2002) words, a 'frozen transience'. If the logic of exception, that by definition is limited in space and time, expands indefinitely – like in the case of the Palestinian refugees – what happens to the space exception? Although placed outside the normal juridical order, is the refugee camp a frozen and never changing space?

In order not to generalise and fall into the law-trap that would indefinitely and inevitably reproduce the logic of the camp while missing processes, life and resistances; empirical analyses are paramount to recognise evolution as well as potential change in the function and identity of these spaces. By taking the Palestinian refugee camp of Shatila (metropolitan Beirut) as case study, I reflect on the politico-juridical structure of the camp, technologies of power applied to these sites in different periods of time and circumstances, and forms of resistance enacted by the Palestinians. Palestinian refugee camps in Lebanon, in fact, represent a peculiar and interesting example of spatialised exception and its management. Although Lebanese authorities established the camps in conversation with humanitarian agencies and for a long time controlled and managed these sites, from 1969 the disengagement from and abandonment of these spaces seem to dramatise the exceptional character of the refugee camps. Today administered and controlled by Palestinian factions, Palestinian camps appear as islands of non-Lebanese territory. So I wonder, what happens to state sovereignty if state authorities willingly disengage from the control of the space of exception? Born for the protection of the state and the nation, could the exception itself represent a threat for the state's security and the nation? What are the technologies of power applied to these spaces and what are the ways in which they operate in and on these sites?

While addressing these questions, this research contributes to the discipline of Geography by urging a reconsideration of the exception itself. While investigating the normal politico-juridical structure of the camp, the exception is also understood through a time-and-space relational approach. While I do not argue that time itself would change the status of the camp, I maintain that the prolonged existence of such spaces challenge the

exceptional and temporary character of these sites. Though born as spaces of exception and as spaces where time freezes as refugees wait for the reconstitution of their rights as citizens, these sites develop through the agency of states' authorities, humanitarian organisations, refugees and other people who may inhabit them.

As discussed above, while focusing on 'forms of life' (qualified political life as opposed to bare life), Agamben misses the notions of life-as-process and life-as-lived-and-everyday-experience. As the legal status of the camp could be extended indefinitely, life inhabiting the camp can (if circumstances and a certain degree of freedom so allows) act on the camp shaping its function, its identity and giving it meanings that were not originally intended by the sovereign's decision on the exception. In other words, the refugee camp is not a static site. As the improvement of the refugees' shelters – from tents to buildings in concrete – testifies, if the landscape of the camp might change so could its function. To this end, this research explores the ways in which refugees' agency is performed and the ways in which a certain degree of normalcy is restored after the sovereign's decision.

An innovative approach inspired by anthropologist Michel Agier (2002, 2003, 2004, 2008, 2011) who looks at refugee camps as city-like structures and as urban spaces in formation, the camp is also understood in its relation to the city. The peculiar urban location of Shatila and the presence of non-Palestinians, including Lebanese citizens, living in the camp today inspire an analysis that, on the one hand, looks at power relations and dynamics occurring within the camp. On the other, it prompts a reflection that rejects the understanding of the camp in its isolation. The social differentiation of the camp inhabited by both Palestinians and non-Palestinians might challenge the function for which the camp was established. This not only threatens the character of the camp as a refugee space, but also stimulates an analysis of the kind of exception applied in Lebanon. By questioning the logic of legal exception as promoted by Agamben, this study welcomes an understanding of the exception as working on social and economic lines too.

Outline of thesis

With the aim of uncovering the complexities of sovereignty, the exception, the ways in which power operates at different scales and the spatialities of the exception, the thesis proceeds as follows. Chapter 1 looks at the genealogies of sovereign power and exception. It explores the triangle composed of law, politics and life and the structures and

spatialities of sovereign power: the ways in which through law and the camp, it casts out certain lives from the normal juridical order producing bare life. While Agamben's theory of the exception constitutes the core of the chapter, Foucault's understanding of power as a relation and as circulating and distributed is utilised to show how after the sovereign decision chances of resistance are maintained.

Chapter 2 offers a reflection on research methodologies. A multilayered methodology made up of ethnographic practices, archive research and interviews reflects multilayered scales of sovereign power and exception. While justifying research choices and concerns, in this part I reflect on the use of a combination of methods, issues of 'representation', power relations and research ethics that inevitably need to be addressed and reflected upon when conducting research with refugees and in sensitive environments such as refugee camps.

The analysis of the 'where' of sovereign power, exception and resistance is then followed by a pair of twinned chapters. By looking at the 'global dimension of sovereignty', Chapter 3 investigates decisions taken at different scales and impacting upon the life and subjectivity of the Palestinian refugees in Lebanon. Whilst providing a historical background of the Palestinian presence in Lebanon, I explore the role of the international community, the United Nations, humanitarian agencies, other Arab states, and the Lebanese government in producing the Palestinian bare life. Not only does this investigation contend that one unique sovereign does not exist, but also argues that sovereignty is a relation in which different actors seek to influence each other's decisions.

As Chapters 3 and 4 are complementary, while the first investigates power relations in the official realm of politics and its consequences on lives and subjectivities, the second reverses the analysis and focuses on non-institutional sites of power and the agency of ordinary people. Rejecting a discourse that depicts the refugees as passive objects of interventions, by focusing on the refugees' – as well as Lebanese citizens' – practices of resistance, it is shown how power is not a prerogative of the sovereign only, but a relation in which even ordinary people may be able to challenge the sovereign's authority. This twinned relation between the chapters is also manifested in the use of sources and materials. While in the first, examining the official realm of politics, the voices of the refugees remain unheard as if embodying the silence imposed by official discourses, in the second, that looks at the other side of the power relation chessboard, the voice of the marginalised and excluded emerges recognising the subalterns' political value and agency.

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The logic of the twinned chapter is also maintained for Chapters 5 and 6. As the first utilises a legal approach that looks at the politico-juridical structure of the Palestinian refugee camps in Lebanon, the second adopts an urban perspective that examines the function of the camp, its evolution and its relation with the outside. In Chapter 5, I investigate the birth of the camp, the status of the land on which the camp is established and the ways in which the exception has evolved in Shatila. From disciplinary power that controls the camp, to the Lebanese authorities' abandonment of surveillance, I discuss the different technologies of power deployed on this space and on the body of the refugees. I argue that while the exception seems to be dramatised as the refugee camps are turning into islands of Palestinian territory within Lebanese sovereign territory, what is at stake in Lebanon is the deployment of a securitarian mode of governance that let things be and reduces intervention and control. While I do not suggest that intervention on the space of the camp is never resumed, I argue that control is exercised in 'potentiality'.

Chapter 6 looks at the kind of biopolitics produced in Lebanon and, in so doing, examines the refugee camps in relation to the city and its outside. Prompted by the presence of a high percentage of non-Palestinians in Shatila, I argue that bare life is not only produced through law and through the Palestinians' body. If a legal exception places the Palestinians at the margins of politics by stripping them of rights, other kinds of exceptions running along social and economic lines cut through the very Lebanese body. As the Lebanese and other foreigners live in the Palestinian refugee camps and in their proximity, the exceptional character and function of the camp may change as its boundaries increasingly blur with what lies outside. By examining the relation of Shatila to the city of Beirut and the informal settlements around the camp, I argue that the exception is no longer confined to the space of the camp as legal and symbolic barriers, that allegedly keep the camp and the 'slum', the refugee and the citizen separated, seem to disappear. These exceptional continuities constitute a new spatial model of analysis that I call 'campscape'. Yet, as different outcasts – Palestinian refugees and non-Palestinian inhabitants – meet in the space of the camp, I also explore the consequences that this transformation in the utilisation of the camp have on the exception and Palestinian life.

These chapters are then followed by a conclusion. In this part I highlight the contributions of this work to the understanding of the refugee condition and the refugee camp. I, moreover, propose new frameworks of analysis for the discipline of Refugee Studies and the sub-discipline of Political Geography.

1- Genealogies of sovereign power and the camp: Bare life and beyond

There are a certain number of things that one can say with some certainty about a concentration camp to the effect that it is not an instrument of liberation, but one should still take into account – and this is not generally acknowledged – that, aside, from torture to execution, which preclude any resistance, no matter how terrifying a given system may be, there always remain the possibilities of resistance, disobedience, and oppositional groupings... liberty is a practice.

(Foucault cited in Elden and Crampton, 2007: 10)

From refugee camps and detention centres to gated communities and tax shelters, recently scholars have been particularly attentive to the proliferation of what Italian philosopher Giorgio Agamben (1995a, 1996, 1998, 2000, 2001, 2005a) has called the 'space of exception'. '[A] piece of land that is placed outside the normal juridical order', the camp is not simply an external space as 'what is excluded in the camp is, according to the etymological sense of the term "exception" (*ex-capere*), *taken outside*, included through its own exclusion' (Agamben, 1998: 170, emphasis in the original). Although not a recent phenomenon, quite provocatively Agamben shows how the logic of the exception pervades our society up to the point that the 'camp' could be considered as the biopolitical paradigm and the *nomos* of the modern political space. Conceptualised and spatialised to pursue different goals, these particular structures are produced to either achieve a measure of authenticity and homogeneity – as in the case of refugee camps, detention centres or gated communities – or to simply create a space devoid of law and financial responsibilities in order to satisfy specific economic goals – like in the case of tax shelters and offshore heavens (among others Diken, 2004; Diken and Laustsen, 2005; Easterling, 2005).

Genealogies of sovereign power and the camp

But how does the exception function and what is its purpose? Following Carl Schmitt's (2005) reflections on the notion of sovereignty, these camp-like structures respond to the logic of the exception in as much as they are all established as extraterritorial spaces to oppose, disrupt, as well as create and suspend the norm. The exception is, in fact, a necessity for the establishment of the norm and the space of its applicability. As Schmitt (2005: 15) put it:

> [T]he exception is more interesting than the rule. The rule proves nothing; the exception proves everything: It confirms not only the rule but also its existence, which derives only from the exception.

The norm is better known and understood through its exception, just like society and normalcy to be constituted must know what is excepted and excluded. To Schmitt, not only is the exception essential to create and maintain the norm, but it is also the concept without which our society would not find its order. While to Schmitt the exception is indispensable to create and maintain the norm, the camp to Agamben becomes the regulatory tool that nowadays creates and maintains a certain logic, coherence and order. Justified by the necessity to protect the state and society, the suspension of the normal juridical order becomes the new technique of government which aims at excluding and distancing those elements that threaten the security of the state and the national body. Refugee camps and detentions centres must therefore be addressed as spaces that function as purifying filters that hide the foreigner and the alien who disrupt the ideal homogeneity and authenticity needed by the national community to be constituted as such (Rajaram and Grundy-Warr, 2007).

According to this understanding, borders are no longer to be found at the limit of the state (Vaughan-Williams, 2009a, 2009b) and must not be identified with the frontier that once used to be perceived as the outer edge of a specific political community. With the advent of biopolitics where life as such is at the centre of power's concerns, borders are continuously constituted and reproduced everywhere and within state boundaries by means of the camp and a plethora of temporary facilities which share many similarities with both the model of the prison or the concentration camp.

Genealogies of sovereign power and the camp

This chapter aims to show different reflections and angles on the concepts of sovereignty and power as well as to give an historical account of the camp, the way it was born, and its significance and use today. While Agamben's position on biopolitics triggers the discussion and critique that follow in the next pages, I rely on different authors and disciplines (such as sociology, geography, refugee studies and anthropology) to trace a genealogy of sovereign power, the camp and technologies used to govern and order society.

As Agamben's reflections on the space of exception and the camp have constituted the theoretical point of departure of the present research, the first part of the chapter is dedicated to a discussion of his understanding of sovereign power and bare life. The discussion on biopolitics is then followed by a reflection on the spatialisation of the exception. In this section, I further investigate the relationship between juridical order and exception as understood in spatial terms and, to this end, Carl Schmitt constitutes the point of departure for an analysis of the camp, the context in which it was born and where it was used. With these reflections on the camp, the discussion touches upon different contexts and uses of the camp: from its appearance in the colonies to its use in Europe at the beginning of twentieth century until the end of the Second World War; to its use in the contemporary era when spaces of exception are produced to defend the national body and the security of the state from any sort of external or internal threat. While Agamben's position on the exception and the camp seems to propose a very negative and pessimistic viewpoint, the argument concludes by questioning the possibilities of resistance to the camp and within the camp. In order to do so, I reflect more on Foucault's notion of power.

Sovereign power and bare life:
Politics, life, law

In ancient Greece there was no single term for the word 'life'. Rather, there was a clear distinction between *zoē*, the bare life or simple fact of living, and *bíos*, the qualified and political life. While the latter was included in the *polis* and embodied the good living, the former was excluded from the political space. Drawing on this example from the classics, Agamben (1995a, 1998) offers his definition of biopolitics, namely the inclusion of life in the mechanisms of power. Though deeply indebted to Foucault (1991, 1998, 2003, 2007) and his studies on power, Agamben's reflections differ from Foucault's

arguments and outcomes. Whereas both agree on the principle that what is at stake today is a form of power that operates over, on and for life as such, the two thinkers disagree on its rationale, birth as well as the dynamics through which power operates. As regards its appearance, while for Foucault biopolitics emerged in the seventeenth century when power's concerns began focusing on the population as a whole, conceived as a political, scientific and biological problem (Foucault, 2003: 245) to which I return later on this chapter; for Agamben (1995a, 1998) biopolitics is not a modern phenomenon, as ever since ancient times the main task of the sovereign has been that to produce bare life, a life stripped of any political and juridical value. Relying on the diametrically opposed but symmetrically constituted figures of the sovereign and bare life, Agamben shows the mechanisms of exclusion and exception that allow for the production of figures such as *homo sacer*, the one that in Roman law could be reduced to bare life by virtue of the suspension of the law. On the one hand, the withdrawal of the law strips him from the protection of civil law – in the case of Roman law the *jus humanum* – rendering this figure less 'human' and killable with impunity. But on the other, the suspension of the divine law – *jus divinum* – reduces him to a life that cannot even be sacrificed. Neither part of the profane world nor part of the divine sphere, this captures the Latin root and etymology of the word *sacer* that means both 'sacred' and 'damned', therefore also associating the word to the idea of taboo, something 'banned', dirty that cannot be touched (1998: 78-79).

The fact that bare life, rather than the qualified life of the citizen, is at the centre of power's concerns marks the indissoluble and secret bond that links sovereign power and law to bare life. It is precisely the life of *homo sacer*, a life exposed to potential death, that constitutes the 'originary political element' as the *vitae necisque potestas* – in ancient Rome the authority of the father over the life of his sons – has been transmitted from the father to the figure of the emperor. This transition is also metaphorically revealed by Brutus's gesture who, after having his sons killed, decided to adopt the Roman people in their place and, in so doing, transferred his power over life and death from his sons to his subjects (pp. 88-89).

For Agamben, sovereignty is the power to dispose of life. To him, and inspired by Schmitt's reflections, the sovereign is he who has the potentiality to decide who is worthy of life – thus included in and protected by the juridical order – and who is not worthy – excluded from the sphere of law and, for this reason, killable with impunity. The sovereign is not so much the one who rules, but the one who manifests himself the most through a decision that radically exposes the life of *homo sac*er leaving him in a zone of indistinction

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between sacrifice and homicide (pp.78-79). However, for Agamben, this gray zone inhabited by bare life is not a space completely excluded from the normal juridical order. The relation of bare life with the political space is a relation of 'ban' as:

> He who has been banned is not, in fact, simply set outside the law and made indifferent to it but rather *abandoned* by it, that is, exposed and threatened on the threshold in which life and law, outside and inside, become indistinguishable (p. 28, emphasis in the original).

The fact that *homo sacer* is the one with respect to whom potentially everybody can act as sovereign by killing him without committing homicide explains why in Romance languages, the 'banned' stands for both 'being at the mercy of' and 'excluded', as well as 'open to all' for '*the originary relation of law to life is not application but Abandonment*' (p. 29; emphasis in the original). In other words, the condition of *homo sacer* is the same experienced by the werewolf – the mythical figure half human and half animal – in as much as both these figures are excluded from, and at the same captured within, the juridical order revealing the hybridity and indecidability of their status. Not only excluded from society and placed outside the realm of law, the banned also maintain an intimate relation to both the community and law. The case of the werewolf here is illuminating as, banned from the community because of his/her/its animal features, he/she/it cannot completely be said of belonging to the animal realm because of his/her/its human condition. This threshold of indecidability represents precisely what Agamben defines as the 'inclusive exclusion'. It is the gray zone that hosts the human and animal aspects, both captured in the figure of the werewolf. It is the zone of indistinction that can be defined neither as part of the city – the community – nor part of the forest – the state of nature where law does not apply (pp. 104-105). The ban creates the threshold that renders the werewolf and *homo sacer* both excluded from community as well as open and disposable to it, and the threshold that holds the sovereign and bare life together into an unbreakable grip.

This kind of relationship, that highlights the impossibility to draw a clear-cut boundary that would separate the inside/inclusion from the outside/exclusion, leads us to

examine Agamben's (2005a) theory of exception so as to further explore the intertwinement that holds together the triangle composed by law, politics and life. As he argues, 'a theory on the state of exception is the preliminary condition for any definition of the relation that binds and, at the same time, abandons the living being to law' (p. 1). Driven by the outbreak of the 'war on terror' following the 9/11 events and the increasing production of exceptional measures and spaces to fight terrorism[1], Agamben takes his analyses on the relationship between sovereign power and bare life, initiated with 'Homo Sacer: Sovereign Power and Bare Life', further by questioning the sense of law, its applicability or suspension and the intimate relation between law and politics, the sovereign and the decision. As he argues (Agamben, 2005a), the state of exception originated from the state of emergency. If the sovereign is the one that can cast out lives from the space where law is applicable, the sovereign is also he who can decide on the state of emergency and, by doing so, renders everyone potentially *homines sacri*.[2] Up to the eighteenth century the declaration of the state of emergency was limited to war time situations and was the sovereign's temporary response to an immediate external or internal danger aimed at protecting the state. However, from then on the necessity to defend the state and public order has expanded so far that now the progressive increase of exceptional measures has led to the production of a new technique of government where the exception has become the rule (pp. 2-6). Whenever the security of the state is endangered, not only are all measures to protect order deemed necessary, but they also allow for the unpunished elimination of all political adversaries or entire categories of people that cannot be integrated into the state and its national body or are simply suspected of constituting a threat (see also Agamben, 2002b, 2002c; Raulff, 2004).

While Schmitt (2005) stressed the bond that links the state of exception – the suspension of the normal juridical order – to sovereignty and, in so doing, placed the exception within the sphere of law, Agamben stresses the paradox of the exception as having the legal form of something that by definition is placed outside the sphere of law. In order to understand whether the exception lies within the realm of law or whether it must, instead, be conceived as a fact, Agamben examines the state of exception through the lens

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[1] For an in depth discussion on the 'war on terror' and the use of exceptional measures in this context see, amongst others, Amoore, 2006; de Goede, 2008; Gregory, 2004.

[2] For an interesting critique of the use of the notion of *homo sacer* in the context of the 'war on terror' as well as refugees, asylum-seekers or immigrants, see Puggiani (2010). She argues that the figure of *homo sacer* should not be associated to Guantanamo prisoners, refugees or asylum seekers so indistinctly. *Homo sacer* was the one that was rendered *sacer*, or bare life, after a crime he/she committed. Therefore, the figure has more affinity to the condition of criminals condemned to the death penalty (pp. 7-8).

of the state of necessity. The adage '*necessitas legem non habet* [necessity has no law]' would already unhinge Schmitt's position (Agamben, 2005a: 1). Since the necessity – necessity to defend public order and the state – must be identified as the source of the exception, this ancient maxim places the exception and the suspension of the law outside the juridical order and would lead to examine the exception as a mere *questio facti*, as a political inevitability. As jurist De Martino (in Agamben 2005a: 1) also puts it, if the normal juridical order is suspended to face a political crisis, the exception must certainly be placed outside law. But neither Schmitt's desire to situate the exception within the juridical order nor De Martino's position on the exception as being outside the normal juridical order can fully exhaust the complexity of the case.

As Agamben continues (p. 24), the adage 'necessity has no law' leads us to consider two possible interpretations: 'necessity does not recognise any law' or 'necessity creates its own law'. Both these interpretations give the idea that necessity legitimises the exception, but the ways in which they welcome the exception is different. In the expression 'necessity does not recognise any law', at stake is a dispensation from the law when applying the norm would be counter-productive. As the dispensation from the law granted by the sovereign is applicable only to a single and very specific case, we are not dealing with the suspension of the whole juridical order. The release of a specific case from law permits exceptional measures to remain outside the normal juridical order and until medieval times, this kind of exceptions allowed for extralegal acts to be committed without any legal consequence. Nonetheless, the second interpretation offered – 'necessity creates its own law' – inscribes the exception within the juridical order. The necessity, here, is not only identified as the source of exception, but must be understood as the source of law too. This explains the reason why it is no longer possible to talk about dispensation from law just like it is not possible to talk about transgression of the norm, as what is at stake here is a true suspension of the juridical order. This inscription of the exception within the juridical order is, as Agamben argues, the determinant aspect of the modern era. The state of exception, that before was declared for single cases to release them from the applicability of law, began being regulated by constitutions of Western democracies themselves. But while in the original drafts of modern states' constitutions, as testified by the French tradition in its 1815 constitution, the state of exception – or state of siege in war-time situation – could be declared only by the legislative power that issues laws, the authority to declare the state of emergency gradually passed to the hands of the executive.

Genealogies of sovereign power and the camp

As Agamben (2005a: 23) points out, it is precisely this the moment in which fact and law, politics and law cannot be distinguished anymore as:

> […] the state of exception is neither external nor internal to the juridical order, and the problem of defining it concerns precisely a threshold, or a zone of indifference, where inside and outside do not exclude each other but rather blur with each other.

Agamben places the exception at the point where politics and law intersect in a zone of indistinction allowing the sovereign to play with fact and law. The zone of indistinction is the zone that hosts spaces like Guantanamo (see also Butler, 2002; Reid-Henry, 2007). In the context of the 'war on terror', in fact, the increasing use of exceptional measures and the proclamation of a sort of permanent state of emergency is the moment in which everybody deemed to be a danger or threat to the security of the state could be deprived of their rights and be turned into *homines sacri*. To Agamben, therefore, the overarching development of the modern era is the fact that bare life has penetrated the political space and the fact that the space of exception, where *zoē* was hidden and confined, comes to coincide with the political space of the *polis* as 'modernity creates a zone of indistinction not so much between inside and outside (of the nation, the town, or the home) but by cutting through every subject and the political' (Diken and Laustsen, 2002; on this see also Amoore, 2006; Amoore and de Goede, 2008; Vaughan-Williams, 2007). To him the newness of the modern is represented by the exception as a new technique of government that renders all of us potential *homines sacri*. According to this understanding exclusion and inclusion, law and politics, and life worth living and the one not worth living cannot be distinguished anymore and they all respond to a logic that only the sovereign knows and decides upon.

The spatialisation of the exception

The <u>nomos</u> of the earth

The relationship between sovereign power and bare life explored so far has also to be understood in geographical terms. While scholars at times overlooked the spatial dimensions involved in the exception and in practices of exclusion, Minca (2006, 2007) stresses the ontological relationship between law and territory, politics and space. To him, and in this indebted to Schmitt's thought, the norm is never applicable to the chaos and the 'where' of its applicability must always be identified. As he points out:

> […] the norm – to allow for its repetition, its enforcement, its very concrete existence, to allow for its 'measure', and the constitution of its 'outside' and its exception – must necessarily be spatialised. The repetition of an act without sanction […] requires a topography able to describe, to grant materiality to the (exceptional) act; it requires a concrete space, a space that is indistinct though not indescribable, merely exceptional (Minca, 2007: 83).

Therefore, not only must the norm be created, but to acquire force its same validity must be localised. By the same token, the exception responds to the same logic in as much as the dis-application and suspension of the law must refer to a particular space.

The relation of the ban is a spatial relation. Not only does the ban separate bare life from the political qualified life, but it also establishes their locations. Similarly, the relation of the werewolf to the community is a relation that, on the one hand, binds together bare life and the sovereign but, on the other, determines spheres of belonging that are translated into mutually constitutive spaces: the city – as inhabited by the community – and the forest – the wild space inhabited by the werewolf. The relation of the figure of the werewolf with the community is a deeply geographical one. Echoing Hobbes and his distinction between the state of nature and the commonwealth, Diken and Laustsen (2005: 24) argue that in medieval times the forest, inhabited by the wolves and werewolves, was the wild space of chaos where law was not applied and the space that was separated from the civilised space

of the city. Historically, the city with its walls has constituted the paradigm of social and political life. The walls marked the beginning of civilisation as they physically delimitated inclusion and exclusion as well as divided the political space from the state of nature (Diken, 2005). As the *Landnahme* – the taking possession of the land – is what gives society its order (Schmitt cited in Diken and Laustsen, 2006), the erection of the fence is the originary gesture that creates both order and disorder, law and its suspension, political space and state of nature. While the state of nature must not be understood on a temporal basis, and therefore as preceding the constitution of civilisation, Diken and Laustsen contend that the uncivilised space is constituted and 'produced *within* the legal domain' (2005: 24; emphasis added). It is precisely through the ban that both law and its suspension are generated at the same time along with their spaces of reference.

According to Schmitt (in Diken and Laustsen, 2005: 39-43), the taking of the land and the establishment of referential spaces such as the forest and city, was constituted by the link between localisation (*Ortung*) and order (*Ordung*). It is in this way that the geographical ordering of space and the establishment of the juridical order were merged together in a single act creating the city and excluding bare life from it. Reflecting on this taking possession of the land on a global scale, Schmitt developed his theory of the '*nomos* of the earth' where *nomos*, from the Greek, stands exactly for the 'appropriation of land'. To him, the '*nomos* of the earth' was the global spatial order that regulated the principles of land appropriation until the First World War when this global order definitively collapsed. What has been defined as 'Euro-American exceptionalism' responded, in fact, to the need for the establishment of a space of order where law was created and applied – Europe – and of a space devoid of law – the colonies (see Gregory, 2006). As Agamben (1998: 36) rephrasing Schmitt puts it, 'the link between localisation and ordering constitutive of the *nomos* of the earth always implies a zone that is excluded from law and takes the shape of a "free and juridically empty space" in which the sovereign power no longer knows the limits fixed by the *nomos* as the territorial order'. The *Jus Publicum Europeum*, therefore, created the space where juridical order was established – Europe – and the space devoid of law – America – where everything could happen. On the one hand, the frontiers of Europe defined the limits of law and its application and, on the other, also established the space inhabited by those who, being excluded from that order, were rendered bare life.

According to Gregory's (2006) reading, with the *nomos* of the earth Schmitt intended to demonstrate how the new principles of 'just war' promoted by the Church

aimed to control conflicts and the use of violence within Europe. The *Jus Publicum Europeum*, in fact, was a two-fold system that, on one hand, regulated diplomatic, commercial or military relations among European states only but, on the other, also had a global scope as by regulating the 'inside' it excepted the 'outside', rendering it conquerable. While there was a code to be respected in warfare in Europe, such code could be transgressed outside its boundaries. Since unlimited violence, abhorred by new theological-moral views of the Church, could no longer be performed in Europe, it became necessary to export this uncontrolled violence to America where no rule was applicable and where no punishment could be sanctioned for any act transgressing the law (ibid). The result of this was the destruction, mass murders, economic exploitation as well as enslavement of indigenous people the colonies went through (Dean, 2007: 31). The *nomos* of the earth was in fact a spatial ordering that was also conceptualised along the lines 'us' vs. 'them'. In order to fight the enemies, law was suspended and in this way legal implications in the use of force or violence were deactivated (Ek, 2006: 365). This state of emergency was applied to the space of America that came to resemble the state of nature where there is no order and where no law is applicable. Hobbes conceived of this kind of space devoid of law as a state of nature where men are no longer to be considered as humans, and where the law of the stronger applies (in Diken and Laustsen, 2005: 41). Indeed, in the colonies 'man was no longer homo *homini homo*, that is "a man to man", but *homo homini lupus*, that is "a man who is a wolf to other men"' (ibid). It is precisely this spatial and legal distinction that led to conceive of the Native Americans as less than 'human'. The inhabitants of the colonies were not human beings and subjects to protect, but were just objects to govern, separate or even enclose. Significant was the colonisation of the 'great plain' in the second half of the nineteenth century when American Indians were forced to relocate in the reservations that soon were fenced with barbed wire (see also Campbell, 1998b: 97-105; Mawani, 2003).

All overseas territories conquered and governed by European powers were perceived as lands where it was possible to assert control by seizing, delimiting and at the same time imposing new sets of social and spatial relations. It was also the space where new social hierarchies and classifications were produced and imposed (Mbembe in Diken and Laustsen, 2005: 41). While disciplinary techniques of government in Europe in the same period aimed at producing docile and skilled bodies to increase the productivity of society (Foucault, 1998), in the colonies the same techniques responded to a different logic. At stake was not only the administration and control of the colonies, but also

exploitation and domination itself as racial distinctions allowed the supposed-to-be superior race to rule in the state of exception that rendered the inhabitants of the colonies bare life.

From the colonies to Auschwitz: The birth of the camp

As Agamben (1995a, 1998) points out, the camp is the space that is produced when the exception becomes the rule and the space where its inhabitants are stripped of any juridical and political value. It is a piece of land that is cast out the normal juridical order and the space where, by virtue of the suspension of this same order, everything becomes possible. Reflecting on the politico-juridical structure of the concentration camp and the practices of the Third Reich, Agamben argues that the camp represents the *nomos* and the 'hidden matrix' of modern times. But where and how the camp was born?

As Bashford and Strange (2003: 2) contend, '[p]ractices of exclusion emerged well before the modern period, and are far from limited to Western cultures'. They include, among others, the exclusion of the lepers in medieval Europe, Indian social separation and classifications, as well as Jewish ghettos that first materialised in Venice in 1516. Yet, as they go on to suggest, the nineteenth and twentieth centuries witnessed the proliferation of confinement practices such as the prison and the concentration camp. However, to examine the proliferation of the camp-like structures in modern times, Foucault's reflections on biopolitics will prove essential.

Whereas for Agamben what is at stake with biopolitics is the production of bare life, in one of Foucault's (1991, 1998) conceptions, biopolitics is the system that produces 'normality' and aims at the normalisation and regulation of the social body. For him, it is the power that, having considered certain economic developments occurring in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, acts on space to divide and separate the population as well as on bodies through disciplinary techniques and constant surveillance. Since this gears at producing a more skilled and ordered society to increase its productivity, it is no wonder that these kinds of techniques emerged with the birth of the capitalist society. Nevertheless, in one of his course of lectures at the Collège de France (1975-76) entitled 'Society must be defended', Foucault (2003) thought of biopolitics in different terms. Investigating if politics is a continuation of war by other means – hence reversing Clausewitz's proposition that considered war as the continuation of politics – he explored power through the model of war. According to Foucault (2003: 59-61), peace and order

mask relations of war that divide society into different groups. He defined this struggle and confrontation in terms of 'race war' whereby 'the social body is basically articulated around two races' opposing each other (p.60). This race war underwent two different transcriptions: the biological transcription that gave birth to the theory of races; and the second that based on the theory of social war understood racial conflicts in terms of class struggles. Both these understandings gave rise to the biological-social racism where the 'other' race is not the one that comes from somewhere else. At stake is one single race that split into two: the 'superrace' – the one dominating – and the 'subrace' – the one deviating from the norm. In this position similar to Agamben's take on sovereign power that excludes certain lives, this discourse of race struggle functions as a principle of exclusion and segregation.

It is in the mid-nineteenth century with medical and biological discourses on race and racial purity that this race war was transformed into a true biological struggle where the political opponents were turned into biological enemies excluded from the national discourse and space (Cavalletti, 2005: 219). The discourse of race struggle coincided with the discourse of the struggle for the existence and survival. And the society that until that moment was conceived as made up by two different races was replaced by the biologically monist society where foreigners were perceived as aliens and, for this reason, were to be excluded (ibid). Hence, the appearance of 'state racism' according to which the state defends its referential race by eliminating the others.

The advent of state racism marked a shift in the way politics is conceived. It is the moment in which politics becomes biopolitics as life, in its biological sense and as the mere fact of living, becomes the centre of power's concerns as it operates on individuals that are conceived as being members of a biological species (see also Cavalletti, 2005: 9-10). While the old theory of sovereignty pivoted around the figure of the monarch and was bound to a form of power that was exercised over the land, the new form of power focused on the population as a whole. From the nineteenth century on, wars were not waged in the name of the monarch and with the purpose of defending his territory or wealth. New forms of conflict appeared and wars were now waged to guarantee and protect the existence of the whole population (Cavalletti, 2005; Foucault, 1998: 137). The latter, in fact, did no longer constitute the strength of the sovereign, but instead came to represent the end of the government (Cavalletti, 2005: 43).

It is precisely the transformation of the political opponent into the biological enemy that led the newborn Western democracies to 'take care' of their national communities by

segregating or even eliminating the biological threats constituted by those deemed to be alien. In this both Foucault and Agamben agree that biopolitics is the power which 'differentiates and divides in order to introduce a distinction that is literally "vital": the distinction between those who must live and those who must die or perhaps between those who must die in order for others to live' (Montag, 2002: 121; see also Foucault, 2003: 254-255). As both Agamben (1995a, 1998, 2005a) and Foucault (2003) maintain, Nazi Germany embodied 'state-racism' in its most brutal form as, trying to protect the Germanic race, systematically segregated and even eliminated all the categories of people that could not be integrated and absorbed into the national political body. The Jew, in fact, was 'the privileged negative referent of the new biopolitical sovereignty and [was], as such, a flagrant case of *homo sacer* in the sense of a life that may be killed but not sacrificed', a life that had no value and, as such, reveals its 'capacity to be killed' without committing a crime (Agamben, 1998: 114). As Arendt (1968: 275) also asserted, this is the moment in which a radical transformation of the state takes place as it turns from an 'instrument of law' into 'an instrument of the nation' whereby the nation definitively seizes the state affirming its priority over law.

The appearance of the concentration camp in Europe definitively revealed the collapse of the *nomos* of the earth and of the order and cohesion that was guaranteed so far, at least in Europe. The camp was, in fact, the incarnation of colonial practices transplanted within the European space. Not only was the definitive rupture of the *nomos* the direct cause of the outbreak of the two World Wars within very few decades, but the collapse of the frontiers allowed for the penetration of unlimited violence in Europe. As Foucault (2003: 103) argued, whereas during the phase of colonisation Europe managed to export its models to the colonies, it did not remain completely immune from side effects:

> [...] while colonisation, with its techniques and its political and juridical weapons, obviously transported European models to other continents, it also had a considerable boomerang effect on the mechanisms of power of the West, and on the apparatuses, institutions, and techniques of power. A whole series of colonial models was brought back to the West, and the result was that the West could practise something resembling colonisation, or an internal colonialism, on itself.

Genealogies of sovereign power and the camp

Although forms of segregation and exclusion were not new in Europe, the camp as such was a colonial invention: first thought, designed, applied and experimented in the colonies as a technique used by European powers to face an immediate danger (among others Deacon, 2003). Without forgetting the practise of enclosing Native Americans in the reservations in the nineteenth century, the first camps made their appearance in Cuba where in 1896 to face a local insurrection the Spanish established the *campos de concentraciones* where rebels were interned (Agamben, 1998: 166). But it was with the beginning of the twentieth century, during the South African War (1899-1902) that the camps were established as strategy to segregate and divide different races. As Stephen Royle (1998: 54) argues, in order to cut any form of supplies or shelter that might have been provided to the guerrillas confronting the British Army, about 30,000 farmhouses were destroyed. As result of the massive displacement provoked, the British set up forty-six refugee camps. Yet, the politics of encampment that characterised this war was not limited to allegedly humanitarian purposes. Particular spaces were used to enclose POWs. Yet, the most resonant event was the establishment of sixty other specific camps that imprisoned 114,000 black Africans only, as if spreading the early seeds of the racial distinction and segregation that would have followed in the coming years in South Africa.

The boomerang effect that brought colonial practices back to the space of Europe seemed to first appear in France where with the outbreak of the First World War the French government set up concentration camps in the region of Drôme after 1915. The aim was to intern foreign nationals – not necessarily combatants – coming from enemy states as *a priori* suspected of being spies or potential informers. Though Gypsies in France had been experiencing persecution since the sixteenth century, only a small number of them were interned. On the one hand, their nomadic tradition might have affected their loyalty to France, but, on the other, the shared perception was that 'national' Gypsies still represented less of a threat if compared to foreigners coming from hostile countries (Fogg, 2008).

Germany represented another case in which the encampment practices developed in the colonies moved to Europe. However, contrary to common belief, the first camps were not set up by the Nazi regime. In 1923, before Hitler's rise to power (1933), the government of the Social Democrats appealing to the *Schutzhaft* – preventive custody – established camps in order to intern political opponents and, in particular, communists who

threatened the political *status quo* in the country (Agamben, 1998: 167).[3] The *Schutzhaft* was a juridical concept born in 1851 and was linked to the state of emergency that, as soon as declared, could suspend all the articles of the constitution dealing with the personal liberties. With the declaration of the state of exception, and the subsequent suspension of the parts of the constitution guaranteeing personal liberties, everybody could potentially be taken into custody or interned for an indefinite period of time. This was the legal – or better, extralegal – foundation that permitted the establishment of the concentration camps in Germany as well as in the territories occupied by the German army during World War II.[4] While the state of emergency is by definition a temporary measure to face an immediate danger, in Germany it lasted twelve years (1933-1945) transforming this temporariness into a permanent civil-war-like situation (Agamben, 1995a, 1998, 2005a). As the *Schutzhaft* was disenfranchised from the martial law and continued being applied under normal circumstances, the exception began being confused with the rule itself. The consequence in this situation of 'indecidability' and of the exception becoming the rule is precisely the camp as 'the state of exception, which was essentially a temporal suspension of the state of law, acquires a permanent spatial arrangement that, as such, remains constantly outside the normal state of law' (Agamben, 2000: 36). As Agamben (1998: 168-169) argues, when Dachau, a concentration camp for political prisoners, was set up, it was kept independent from the normal juridical order and, in particular, neither penal law nor prison law were applied. However, despite the fact that the camp is placed outside the normal juridical order, we cannot affirm that this is a space external to this same order. Just like bare life is never completely excluded from the political community and the sphere of action of the sovereign, so is the camp included by virtue of its same exclusion as the sovereign can still decide and act upon it. The camp is, in fact, placed in the 'zone of indistinction' where every determination – distinction between fact and law – is no longer applicable and is 'the structure in which the state of exception – the possibility of deciding on which founds sovereign power – is realised *normally*' (p. 170 emphasis in the original; see also Giaccaria and Minca, 2011).

Those interned entered a zone of indistiction in which law, legal protection and rights no longer made sense, revealing and exposing their bare life. Having created a space

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[3] For an example of other forms of exception applied in that period to fight communism see Landzelius 2006.

[4] For Schmitt (2005) the state of exception is part of the juridical order to the point that article 48 of the German Constitution of 1919 provides the chance to declare the state of emergency and suspend law. According to Schmitt, the exception is to be placed within the juridical order as the declaration of the state of exception is still something different from chaos and anarchy (p. 12).

devoid of law, everything became possible in the camps and the suspension of the normal juridical order allowed for the elimination of the biological threat represented by Jews (mainly), but also Gypsies and homosexuals: all categories of people that could not be integrated into the German national political body. As Agamben (1998: 171) puts it, '[i]nsofar as its inhabitants were stripped of every political status and wholly reduced to bare life, the camp was also the most absolute biopolitical space ever to have been realised, in which power confronts nothing but pure life, without any mediation'.

While at the very beginning concentration camps were thought to serve an utilitarian purpose – that of extracting labour and productivity from the encamped subraces as well as political prisoners – later on, and especially after the decision on the 'Final Solution', the camps became death factories. Once the utilitarian aspect was abandoned, they were turned into spaces where 'absolute power' could be exercised and the superiority of the German race affirmed along with the inmates' 'capacity of being killed' (Arendt cited in Diken and Laustsen, 2005: 50). Reflecting on the mechanisms of absolute power[5], Sofsky (1997) points out that this form of power can never be confused with its disciplinary or punitive forms. It takes the exercise of power to the limit where terror, excessive violence and unpredictability are essential. This, nevertheless, does not imply that disciplinary techniques could not be applied. Quite the contrary as in the camps there was a meticulous ordering of space, time and social structures. It ordered space, determined and localised sites for any event dividing work zones from residential blocks and exterminating areas. It applied a precise system of classification as not all the prisoners were considered the same. According to this structure, social positions were determined based on the inmates' origin or status. But also temporal ordering was at stake as any action was carefully planned in detailed intervals and durations – to eat, sleep and work.

What, according to Sofsky, differentiates absolute power from disciplinary power was the monopoly of the decision and arbitrariness. In order to nullify any attempt of resistance or rebellion, it had to be unpredictable in every aspect so as to avoid any form of resistance. It was a form of organised and systematic terror that could change and hit at any moment. Just like the *Führer* was the 'living *nomos*' during the Third Reich – as he could decide on the rule or its exception constantly – the SS (the *Schutzstaffel*) could be seen as the 'living *nomos*' within the camp boundaries as they could arbitrarily change rules,

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[5] I use the notion of 'absolute power' as developed by Sofsky (1997).

classifications and plans without any notice as systems of classifications, actions or times could never be predicted or calculated.

As Sofsky (1997: 47) goes on to suggest, while other forms of power act on space and time to guide social relations and actions, absolute power in the concentration camps turned space from 'a domain for acting and living' into an instrument of discrimination and death. Inmates, under these circumstances, were no longer subjects. The *Muselmann* – literally 'Muslim' – is the term that defined the most common prisoners of the concentration camps as 'living corpses', those that touching the bottom cannot, and most of all do not, want to take care of themselves anymore. It was precisely the loss of will and consciousness that characterised *der Muselmann* at the point in which he/she could not even hope for death to come: death, pain and sufferance could not be felt anymore. It was a man turning into a non-man (see also Agamben, 2002a: 41-86). As Primo Levi (1987: 93) put it:

> All the musselmans who finished in the gas chambers have the same story, or more exactly, have no story; they followed the slope down to the bottom, like streams that run down to the sea. On their entry to the camp, through basic incapacity, or by misfortune, or through some banal incident, they are overcome before they can adapt themselves; they are beaten by time... Their life is short, but their number is endless; they, the *Muselmänner*, the drowned, form the backbone of the camp, an anonymous mass, continually renewed and always identical, of non-men who march and labour in silence, the divine spark dead with them, already too empty to really suffer. One hesitates to call them living: one hesitates to call their death death, in the face of which they have no fear, as they are too tired to understand (emphasis in the original).

Prisoners of the camp were no longer people, not only in the eyes of the Nazi officers running the camp, but, as the instance of the *Muselmann* shows, even to their own eyes. They were the 'scum of the earth', men, women and children whose life had no value and, for this reason, became killable. The Jews, that came to embody the 'stereotypical figure'

that inhabited the camp, revealed the rupture of the link between order (nation-state) and localisation (territory) that was mediated by the inscription of life by virtue of the birth (Diken and Laustsen, 2005: 50). As Jews could not fit into the nation, their life had to be localised in the camp, the space of exception, where they could be exterminated to protect and preserve the German state and race.

Yet, according to Agamben (1995a, 1998), despite promises and pledges that Auschwitz – and similar structures – would have never appeared again, the politico-juridical system that allowed for all this to happen, is still part of our democracies. Certainly in other forms and with different purposes, but not only has the camp not been abandoned, but it has become the new biopolitical tool that still regulates, governs and orders our societies.

'Society must be defended!': Refugee camps and detention facilities

The advent of biopolitics marks a definitive shift in the ways in which politics and sovereignty are conceived. In his courses at the Collège de France entitled 'Society must be defended' (1975-1976) and 'Security, Territory, Population' (1977-1978), Foucault (2003, 2007) asserted that in the seventeenth century mechanisms of power began changing. As discussed above, rather than focusing on land and territory, power began operating on bodies and the population as a whole. Although the passage is never immediate as one system does not completely replace another (Foucault, 2007: 8), along the classic theory of sovereignty elaborated by a juridically-oriented thought that centred on the figure of the monarch, other paradigms and forms of government emerged. Different systems might coexist and though techniques of subjugation might be similar, it is the end of government that changes giving more prominence to certain concerns over previous others.

Whereas the problem of the monarch was to find any means to preserve his relationship with what he dominated – hence, his principality comprised of territory, subjects and wealth that constituted his strength – with the advent of biopolitics power could no longer be understood in terms of law or rights of the sovereign. As discussed above, in the disciplinary society from the seventeenth century the problem of the sovereign – or better the newborn bourgeoisie – was not so much the preservation of his/its strength. A new form of power was rising, a power that in two distinct ways abandoned concerns over territory and shifted its interest on bodies and the population as a whole

(Foucault, 1998: 139). With the aim of increasing and optimising the capabilities and productivity of subjects, it operated on 'bodies as machines' while disciplining them. It acted on different fields and through different institutions – such as schools, prisons, hospitals to name but few – in order to regulate and 'normalise' the subjects and their behaviour. With the rise of capitalism, in fact, the population emerged as an economic and political problem to the extent that even sexuality needed to be regulated. On the other hand, it was a system that focused on control and, in doing so, applied a 'biopolitics of the population' whereby life and 'body as species' constituted the focus of its preoccupation. It no longer dealt with the power of death over subjects as it was with the case of the monarch. Since death was now perceived as a limit, power began focusing on life and had to guarantee the survival of its population. The seventeenth century, in fact, is the moment in which knowledge and power revealed their most intimate link as, in order to take care of the population, governments needed knowledge about mortality and birth rates, longevity, causes of death, and medical treatments or cures to fight diseases (ibid).

The advent of the era of governmentality and security in the eighteenth century as well as the gradual consolidation of the state system after the Peace of Westphalia (1648) brought another significant change in the ways in which power operates. While focusing on the health and well-being of the population and responding to the rules of liberalism, the new governmentality and security paradigm lets things be. While working on probabilities, possibilities and preventive measures, power does not prohibit or correct anymore as it was the case with the precedent systems. Focusing on the effects on the whole population – abandoning in this way its concerns with single individuals – the governmentality system calculates costs, risks and consequences with the aim of preserving the whole (see also Amoore, 2009; Amoore and de Goede, 2008). This is the moment in which also a new concept makes its appearance. The Raison d'État becomes the principle that guides governments as it aims to defend the state and its integrity (Foucault, 2007: 255-283). In particular, and by extension of this concept, from then on the aim of the nation-state would be that of preserving its population conceived as nation.

It is exactly at this point that Agamben's (1995a, 1998, 2005a) reflections on contemporary politico-juridical systems, especially in the context of the 'war on terror', reunite with Foucault's thought. As Agamben suggests, the gradual expansion of the executive power, that issues decrees having force of law at the expenses of the legislative power whose task is to issue laws, is the peculiar manifestation of the state of exception of our democracies allowing for extralegal and extraordinary measures to be taken.

Genealogies of sovereign power and the camp

Nevertheless, as Foucault (2007) highlighted, one of the consequences of this change in systems of power has led to the gradual regression of the juridical order as dictated by law. While in the disciplinary society the 'norm' – to be understood as normalisation – acquired prominence over the law, in the era of governmentality Raison d'État supersedes law to the extent that, in its task to defend the state and its population, it can even command, modify or suspend law. It is a politics that does not recognise law as its first and guiding principle since the necessity, as also Agamben (2005a) points out, is 'over and above the law' (Foucault, 2007: 262).

Old techniques of power are used to face new realities and problems. A whole series of geographies of exception are more than ever becoming the rule today as they attempt to enclose, control or even eliminate threats or supposed threats. As Agamben (1998: 174) asserts:

> If this is true, if the essence of the camp consists in the materialisation of the state of exception and in the subsequent creation of a space in which bare life and the juridical rule enter into a threshold of indistinction, then we must admit that we find ourselves virtually in the presence of a camp every time such a structure is created, independent of the kinds of crime that are committed there and whatever its domination and specific topography.

The 'return of the camp' is ever more prominent as we consider the proliferation of structures like Guantanamo or if we think about the whole network of secret prisons around the world (Aspe and Combes, 2000; Minca, 2005). While some would argue that the issue here is not the mere defence of the state but an imposition of a new colonial order or the unlimited exercise of power (on this see Gregory, 2004, 2006), the defence of the state is still very significant as we witness the tightening of controls at the borders as well as the establishment of off-shore processing centres or camp-like structures that can stop or slow down income fluxes (Afeef, 2006; Bigo, 2007; Dikeç, 2009; Hyndman, 2000; Hyndman and Mountz, 2007; Loescher, 1999; Salter, 2006; Vaughan-Williams, 2009a, 2009b).

Nonetheless, the protection of some states and their security is not the only reason for the proliferation of detention facilities and refugee camps as the defence of the nation that constitutes the state becomes the government's concern too. From 'society must be defended' to 'nation must be defended', the encampment of the foreigner – immigrant, asylum-seeker or refugee – is therefore justified on the ground of security reasons but also renders more explicit new forms of racism no longer based on biological assumptions. As Étienne Balibar (cited in Montag, 2002) asserts, modern racism does not seem to be funded much on racial distinctions since today dominant themes that exclude the 'other' work more on cultural differences. Indeed, biological racism based on the theory of races and on 'nature' that looked at the foreigner as the 'unhealthy', the 'unnatural' and the 'abnormal' has been superseded by a new form of racism based more on culture. More differences in human subjects are 'recorded' in the field of culture than in that of science as the latter seems to agree on a sort of 'egalitarian universalism' on the biological level. As genetics and biology no longer provide a flourishing ground for racism – having proved that race is nothing but a social construction – exclusionary practices are grounded both on security as well as on cultural/national reasons (Montag, 2002: 117-119).

Reflecting on the problem of the nation-state and the employment of camp-like structures, Paul Gilroy (1999) affirms that state racism is still performed today in governments' attempts to separate people and 'races' by means of camp. To him, the camp is first of all a mentality and a frame of mind that responds to the need for a more homogenous society that cannot be corrupted by the different. As Gilroy goes on to suggest, from 'mental' camps to actual ones, though, the step is short as fences geographically separate the undesired from the rest of society. Though the encampment of illegal immigrants, refugees and the like is today justified in order to defend the population, guarantee its security and protect the nation, the 'ban' takes the form of a multilayered marginalisation. Perceived as a threat to the 'national body' and criminalised by contemporary discourses on immigration, immigrants and refugees are considered the modern *homines sacri* excluded from the political life and, at the same time, included in the sphere of the sovereign that manages their lives through different techniques of control (among others Rajaram and Grundy-Warr, 2004).[6]

As Agamben explains, it is not a coincidence that the 'camp' makes its appearance again today. With the collapse of the old *nomos* that used to hold together the trinity –

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[6] For a deeper discussion on the 'invasion complex' see also Papastergiadis, 2006 and Shapiro, 1998.

localisation (territory), order (the State) and birth (the nation) – from which modern nation-states originated, the main task of governments is that of constantly defining who can be considered as part of the political community and who is to be excluded. As a result, in its multiple forms and with the aim of containing those considered to be external to the order of the state, the camp becomes the hidden matrix of modern political spaces as it has come to embody 'the fourth, inseparable element that has now added itself to – and so broken – the old trinity composed of the state, the nation (birth), and land' (Agamben, 1998: 176). In this context, the refugee, in particular, proves to be the most unprotected figure of our times as having broken the link between birth and territory and perceived as a disrupting element of the consolidated nation-state system reveals his/her bare life (Agamben, 1998: 126-135 and 174-176; see also Agamben, 1995b; Lui, 2002; Malkki, 1995b). As Arendt (1968: 267-302) argued, the problem lies with the fact that the French Revolution had associated the Rights of Man with the rights of the citizen since the image of the man in the 'Declaration of the Rights of Man and the Citizen' was not the 'bare' human being but the people conceived as national body. Hence, the loss of the nationality corresponds to the loss of human rights and that is why the refugee is the figure that most renders explicit and visible his/her bare life as law – state order – abandons him/her. Deprived of any political and juridical value, the refugee as well as the asylum-seeker is therefore exposed to any form of violence. Though conceived as temporary sites where refugees wait for their rights as citizens to be reconstituted by means of resettlement programs or repatriation, refugee camps reveal themselves as true biopolitical spaces that keep the refugees far from society. While designed as spaces where the refugee can receive assistance and relief as he/she lost any means of livelihood, they are more likely to turn into 'spaces of humanitarian exception' where the humanitarian cause is appealed to pursue well other political aims (see also Elden, 2006). In her analysis of the refugee regime and the responses of the international community in cases of mass displacements due to conflicts or poverty, Lui (2002) argues in fact that '[t]he refugee regime is a form of geopolitical humanitarianism that has as its' "core business" the preservation of the value of the nation-state form and the institution of national citizenship'.

The containment, the limitation of the freedom of movement, constant surveillance, not to mention the many other restrictions refugees have to face, clearly show the purpose of prohibiting their assimilation with the surrounding environment and the national order. With the aim of protecting society and preventing integration, the discursive distance, whereby the alien is criminalised and constitutes a threat also in terms of access to

common resources, always turns into a geographical distance as refugee camps or detention centres are usually set up in peripheries (Diken and Laustsen, 2005; Hyndman, 2000; Perera, 2002; Rajaram and Grundy-Warr, 2004). Illegal immigrants, asylum-seekers and refugees are all subjected to containment practices and unlimited physical or psychological violence for which no legal consequence applies as camps and structures alike are kept independent from the normal juridical order just as it happened with respect to the concentration camps. They become true biopolitical spaces that render inmates at the complete mercy of the police or state authorities that act as sovereigns. But camps, designed to limit the contact with the public are supposedly transitory spaces that can often turn into permanent spaces of exception where the fence marks the geographical, economic and social marginalisation of its inhabitants. Turning temporality into permanency, this same fence becomes the breaking tool dividing normalcy from misery, and the life of the citizen – the one deserving to live – from the life of our contemporary *homines sacri* (Diken and Laustsen, 2005).

The 'where' of resistance

Agamben's reflections on the contemporary political space and sovereign power have widely resonated within different disciplines. As regards the camp, although many found Agamben's association of the concentration camp to other kinds of containment structures like refugee camps or detention centres very disturbing (see Isin and Rygiel, 2007), the camp to be defined as such does not have to be identical to those spaces that once had been administered and run by the Nazis (Campbell, 2002a, 2002b). It should not be forgotten that the Nazi concentration camps were never still and frozen spaces and, at the beginning, were certainly not set up as death factories. Concentration camps evolved with the time: from spaces where to intern the political opponents and labour camps where the inmates were forced to increase the productivity of the Nazi forces, to extermination sites for those who could not be integrated and assimilated (Campbell, 2002b: 149-152).[7] But, are we allowed to talk about 'camp' only in the presence of a space designed to pursue extermination and where gas chambers are built?

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[7] Not all the Nazi camps have been established as 'death factories'. As Campbell (2002b: 151, 167 note 16) argues, there were only six extermination camps and they were all located in Poland. Four of them have been established as death factories (Chelmno, Belzec, Sobibor, Treblinka), while Auschwitz-Birkenau and Lublin were first established as concentration camps and only later turned into extermination sites.

Genealogies of sovereign power and the camp

Without denying the 'uniqueness' of the Holocaust for its weight in terms of mass and systematic killing of a race, we should instead focus on the political and juridical structures that allow for certain categories of people to be cast out from the political community. As also Elden (2009: 57) contends:

> It is essential to recognise that the Nazis appropriated an earlier model of the camp from colonial practice and used it in at least two different ways: the concentration camps, which were used as administrative tools to deal with domestic opponents and those deemed medically degenerate, and the later extermination camps. It is the first of these that provides a model for contemporary analyses, not the second.

As Agamben (2002d) himself admitted, the way he reflects on the camp does not certainly aim at drawing unchallenged parallels between Nazi concentration camps and present day refugee camps or detention centres (see also Raulff, 2004). Working with paradigms, and in this way taking historical phenomena and figures as singularities occurred in the past that share similar structures with present day situations, he suggests that we should avoid focusing on the extermination practices of the Third Reich that unquestionably did not know equals. Rather, we should realise that the mechanisms that allowed for the setting up of the concentration camp are still so real and prominent. In order to avoid unfair associations, the proliferation of numerous and very diverse 'spaces of exception' requires us to consider every single case through specific empirical analyses rather than through a-historical and generalised considerations.

As regards the refugee condition and refugee camps, some studies have already suggested how the refugee camp is not a unique and general space, but that most importantly is historically and geographically situated (among others Malkki, 1996; Peteet, 2005). Especially in situations of protracted refugeehood, it has been shown that although their inhabitants are not assimilated or integrated, refugee camps are ever-changing spaces to the extent that fences can disappear and it is no longer possible to distinguish the camp from its outside.

Genealogies of sovereign power and the camp

A second point of contention of Agamben's insights regards the concept of exception. Many have drawn on his theories and approach to understand and explain the modern 'exceptional' times. While some scholars seem to agree and apply Agamben's insights (also uncritically, therefore identifying sovereign power with the state and *homo sacer* with the refugees), many have also raised concerns on potential epistemological leaks in Agamben's argument. Firstly, if we are to accept that we live in exceptional times and that the state of exception is expanding indefinitely, we have to assume that there is a 'normal time'. Yet, throughout the last century or so, exceptional measures have constantly been taken in different countries to face non-war time situations. In particular, as Neocleous (2006: 198) argues, we are facing too many crisis management situations to talk about exceptions. In other words, the so-called exception is just part of the 'plain, everyday, political management, the modern state of affairs' as law and politics are not separate domains, but they feed each other (ibid). Moreover, rather than a suspension of the law, we witness a very opposite phenomenon. Law is used to 'except', and legal experts and advisers are increasingly consulted to 'create' laws that justify so-called exceptional measures. As Johns (2005) puts it, it is more the case that the exception retreats rather than ascends as law operates in excess. No wonder that the executive of governments shapes and creates norms and rules.

Rather than focusing on a law-and-right perspective, it could be more interesting to adopt another approach. This brings us back to the quotation with which this chapter has begun and leads us to investigate and question more deeply the relations of exception, law, politics and bare life today. Can we really associate the figure of the refugee to that of *homo sacer*? Certainly, Agamben's position on sovereign power does not leave much space for resistance, but if we address these spaces through Foucault's lenses of power, the answer to the question would not be positive (Connolly, 2005; Foucault, 1998: 92-102; see also Edkins and Pin-Fat, 2004). Only abandoning a perspective that looks at power in terms of law can we uncover different forms of resistance that might even take place in abject spaces such as refugee camps. Power, in fact, is first of all a process in which different struggles take place and must never be understood in terms of a unilateral relationship in which the dominant will always exercise his/her authority over the dominated. It is, in fact, a reciprocal process whereby different actors 'seek to affect each other' and have reciprocal impacts (Dean, 2007: 9). Domination is never absolute and, just like Gramsci's notion of hegemony, is always disputed, negotiated and contrasted as wherever there is power there is a form of resistance (see Mauffe, 1979). It is in this way

that power can be conceived as positive and productive rather than negative and restrictive. It is exactly this change of perspective that allows us to look at the relationship between governments and refugees as a strategic encounter where the latter do not necessarily embody the impotent bare life.

Although Foucault analysed institutions (such as schools, prisons, hospitals) to explore the ways in which power operates and affects subjects, he also welcomed a disengagement of power from the idea of the state. This passage is crucial so as to uncover power relations and responses that constantly develop in refugee camps, detention centres or similar structures and essential to explore the 'how' that binds the state, its practices (as well as so-called non-state actors) with the life of those encamped. Most of all, also the 'decision', that to Agamben and Schmitt is a prerogative of the sovereign allowing him an absolute control, must be disenfranchised from the figure of the sovereign himself as the power to decide lies with the whole spectrum of society where each of us are everyday called to make a decision. Sovereignty in fact 'is neither limited to the law nor to the state [… as] the exception cannot be restricted to a formally declared "state of emergency" in which law is suspended and martial rule or emergency powers are brought into force' (Dean, 2007: 189).

Focusing on lived experiences and daily struggles, we might be able to uncover multiple ways of 'resisting', or better surviving, the sovereign's dictates that want the refugee, asylum-seeker or immigrant turned into a bare life. It is essential to recognise '[t]he value of a more flexible, small-scale, and unbureaucratic activism' (Bayat, 2004: 87; see also Papastergiadis, 2006). Political agency must therefore be disenfranchised from the state and its institutions. Echoing Isin and Rygiel (2007), this means that the life of those interned in detention facilities or refugee camps is highly political as one becomes a political subject when he/she enacts and claims the rights that she does not have (Rancière, 2004). Immigrants and asylum-seekers sealing their mouths and eyes are a strong instance as they protest and resist governments' multiple attempts to hide and silence them as if they did not exist (Edkins and Pin-Fat, 2004; Isin and Rygiel, 2007). Yet, life after the decision does exist.

Concluding remarks

In the previous sections, I have discussed the ways in which sovereign power operates on life and space. In particular, it was shown that as sovereign power casts certain

lives outside the normal juridical order – therefore producing unprotected and killable bare lives – at the same time referential spaces are established too. The camp, built today as filter of the nation, is the space in which the alien and foreigners are enclosed and kept far from society. Refugee camps and detention centres share some similarities with the model of the concentration camp in so far as the normal juridical order within their boundaries is suspended creating a biopolitical space where the life of its inhabitants and inmates is exposed to any violence. Yet, as Agamben's position on sovereign power and bare life seems to not leave any space for resistance or counter-politics, Foucault's understanding of power will prove crucial in the following chapters to exit the logic of sovereignty as developed by Agamben. Moving away from a law-and-right approach, multiple strategies for survival are developed within the very space of exception (see Chapter 5 and 6) as well as beyond it (Chapter 4).

Although many have identified sovereign power with the state and state's authorities controlling and managing the camps, it is paramount to remind that strategies of refugees' and asylum-seekers' encampment have a wider resonance than the state and are not technologies used by state authorities only. These temporary facilities also reflect global concerns over the maintenance of a geopolitical order grounded on the well-established nation-state system.

By investigating the case of Palestinian refugees and their presence in Lebanon, it will be shown how sovereign power cannot be identified with the state only. By exploring multiple scales (international, regional, national and subnational including the individual), I demonstrate how sovereign power extends beyond the state's boundaries (Chapter 3) and how resistance can still be performed (Chapters 4, 5, 6).

2- From the 'field' to the 'representation': Reflections on methods, power relations and ethics

We cannot know everything, nor can we survey power as if we can fully understand, control or redistribute it. What we may be able to do is something rather more modest but, perhaps, rather more radical: to inscribe into our research practices some absences and fallibilities while recognising that the significance of this does not rest entirely in our own hands.

(Rose, 1997: 319)

Ethnographers are more and more like the Cree hunter who (the story goes) came to Montreal to testify in court concerning the fate of his hunting lands in the new James Bay hydroelectric scheme. He would describe his way of life. But when administered the oath he hesitated: "I'm not sure I can tell the truth…. I can only tell what I know."

(Clifford, 1986: 8)

Sixty-three years after the Nakba (1948), Palestinian refugees and refugee camps are still very much a reality (i.e. 2011). In particular, Palestinians in Lebanon have suffered the most acute social, economic and spatial marginalisation. My interest in the Palestinian refugees in Lebanon began some years ago when an undergraduate student of 'Oriental Languages and Cultures' in Ca' Foscari University of Venice (Italy). Concerned with the inconclusiveness of the Peace Process that started in the early 1990s, at the time my investigation pivoted around the Palestinians' legal status in the country. Fieldwork in Beirut in 2004 was based on archival research to find out more about the ways in which Lebanese legislation contributes in placing the Palestinians at the margins of politics. Very

little time was dedicated to the visit of the camps or to encounters with the Palestinians. I thought that knowing about what they are excluded from and the official politics towards them could reveal their predicament and condition. In the pages of what became my BA dissertation, laws, decrees and administrative orders 'spoke for and about them' as if official statements and politics could narrate their everyday life and struggles (Martin, 2005).

While the analysis of past researches and methodologies is beyond the scope of this chapter, previous experiences have shaped the ways in which this doctoral investigation has been undertaken. My previous lack of consideration of Palestinian 'voices' was a gap I felt needed to be filled. Documentary testimony represented by the Lebanese legislation and discrimination against the refugees needed to be supplemented with life experiences and accounts of everyday struggles. Aware that refugees' accounts would have always been filtered through my interpretation and authorship and therefore aware of the impossibility of escaping the 'speaking for' dilemma, my doctoral investigation was two-fold. On the one hand, and aware that responsibility for the conditions of the Palestinians in Lebanon does not lie on the Lebanese state only, I became increasingly interested in uncovering the complexity and multiplicity of sovereign powers that affect the Palestinian refugees in Lebanon. While looking at different geopolitical scales (international, regional, national, and sub-national including the individual), I seek to examine how different interests, representations and concerns conflate into the Palestinian life and how technologies of power acquire a spatial form through the establishment of refugee camps. On the other hand, and in this countering a literature that tends to locate power in the official sites of politics, I was interested in exploring the refugees' everyday practices of survival and forms of resilience that resist and challenge their political, social and economic exclusion.

In order to address these concerns, a combination of sources and methods was essential. A multilayered method which includes archival research, interviews with stakeholders, and ethnography in the refugee camps seemed the right approach to investigate the exception itself: the way it is produced, the sovereign/s deciding on it, and the ways it is 'received'. In line with my critique of Agamben's state and space of exception, combined methods would uncover multilayered exceptions decided by different actors (see Chapter 3 and 5). As representation of the Palestinians and their camps has been the focus of archive research and interviews with stakeholders, official statements and the official politics needed to be supplemented with and analysed along 'subaltern' and 'de-

subjugated knowledges' of the refugees (Foucault, 2002, 2003). As this doctoral investigation does not claim any objectivity or universal understanding of what it means to be a Palestinian refugee in Lebanon, some clarification on research methods, ethics and unequal power relations are explored in the following sections to contextualise the production of this knowledge. In so doing, I intend to situate my claims as well as reflect on the different 'texts' (interviews and documents) on which the analysis of the following chapters is based. While drawing some reflections on the methodologies adopted, this chapter critically addresses significant stages of the research process before, during and in the aftermath of the fieldwork. As reflection on the research as a whole required an investigation of the self – personal and academic concerns and ethics – the reader may notice a different writing style from the one adopted so far. Less formal and perhaps less 'academic', I intended that my methodology could be read the way I 'lived' it and 'experienced' it stressing the potential biases, difficulties, the complexity of power relations in the field and its aftermath as well as issues of authorship and representation. In order to further problematise sensitive and ethical concerns of doing research, a sense of failure is included too. Although failings seem not to appear often in research methodologies, I believe that the only way to provide an honest account of the research process, constraints and difficulties should emerge along with reflections on complex and unequal power relations that inevitably mark Western investigations of the Palestinian predicament.

Planning and negotiating before the field

As discussed in the Introduction, the first considerations of the Palestinian refugees' lives and camps in Lebanon heavily drew on Agamben's (1995a, 1998, 2005a) reflections on 'sovereign power', 'exception', the 'camp' and 'bare life' (see Chapter 1). Literature on the refugee's condition and spaces seemed to identify sovereign power with state's authorities who, from legislation to actual control of the camps, are deemed responsible for the production of the refugee's bare life. Yet, this framework seemed problematic. The scope of the question of Palestine was not only a Lebanese preoccupation as different governments (beyond Lebanon and Israel) and international institutions (such as the UN) have greatly contributed to the Palestinians' marginalisation and exclusion from a just political solution. Decisions taken at different scales needed to be investigated to

locate and identify the multiplicity of sovereign powers that affect the Palestinian life in the country (see Chapter 3 and 5). Moreover, interested in exploring what happens after the decision on the exception has taken place and what the Palestinians' forms of resistance are, refugees' voices and spaces needed to be included in order to problematise the often taken for granted assumptions that 'refugees equal bare life' and 'refugee camps equal space of exception'.

In order to address these concerns, I decided to adopt a qualitative approach through ethnographic practices and archival research. On the one hand, archival research accompanied with interviews with Lebanese government's officials, UN and Palestinian representatives, would have provided insights into the politics of exclusion of the Palestinian refugees' and refugee camps in Lebanon. While this approach would have been essential to uncover the juridical and legal aspects of the Palestinians' lives and camps in Lebanon, only ethnographic practices and participant observation in the camps could reveal the lived experiences, everyday struggles and resilience of the refugees. Direct observation could uncover the extent to which we might consider the refugee camp through Agamben's lenses of exception. As Nick Megoran (2006) argues, in fact, there is an urgent need to bring ethnography and ethnographic practices into the sub-discipline of political geography. In his research on the Uzbekistan and Kyrgyzstan boundary, Megoran (2006: 627) suggests that ethnographic participant observation combined with 'technico-legal studies' might be the right key to understand political and geopolitical decisions as well as their impact on communities. In particular, ethnographic practices offer the chance to observe the ways in which people react to marginalisation and discrimination to which they are confined by developing different strategies of survival.

Fieldwork in Lebanon was crucial to address the research questions. Although it would have been interesting to access and research camps in remote areas far from Beirut, staying in the capital could allow observation of one of the camps of Metropolitan Beirut and facilitate access to archives, libraries and stakeholders. Moreover, while the camps of the capital could be easily accessed with no checkpoint obstructing entries and exits, this was not the case for the rest of the Palestinian camps. Indeed, my attempts to enter El-Buss camp in Tyre failed as I was stopped at the checkpoint and refused entry claiming that a special permission from Lebanese intelligence was required.

Considering the time constraints and potential risks in accessing other camps, I therefore decided that my investigation would have focused on Shatila (Metropolitan Beirut). Although Shatila is one of the most studied camps in Lebanon and the Middle East

as site of one of the most tragic events of twentieth century history – the massacre of Sabra and Shatila in 1982 – it could still be approached from different angles and perspectives. Rosemary Sayigh's (1994) and Julie Peteet's (2005) work have offered an excellent background on the history of the camp, its evolution and the predicament of its inhabitants. While the political structure and administration of this camp has been partially covered (Kortam, 2007, 2008), Shatila's present day urban location also stimulated the examination of the relation of the refugee camp to informal settlements and the city. Very often, in fact, refugee camps are considered as separate spaces worth of attention and as spatial devices aiming at separating the figures of the refugee and the citizen. However, in this research I wanted to also move the enquiry beyond the camp boundaries to investigate in innovative ways the relationship of the camp with what lies outside (see Chapter 6). Therefore, although Shatila has extensively been written about, new perspectives could still be uncovered and revealed.

In the field: Between 'Ethics' and 'ethics'

Ethnographic practices and 'embodied' research

Fieldwork in Beirut was conducted in three months between October 2008 and January 2009. As it included ethnographic practices, residing in the camp would have been the preferable solution to undertake ethnographic observation and to contribute to the life of the camp. However, a combination of strict university regulations and unfamiliarity with the camp led me to opt for accommodation outside Shatila. While 'proper' ethnography would require living with and fully participating to the community's life, the approach of my research could still be considered ethnographic as I planned to regularly commute to the camp throughout the length of my stay in Beirut for some three days a week (Crang and Cook, 2007: 39; see also Bennett, 2002). Although I kept open the possibility to move to the camp once I had established trustworthy contacts, this possibility did not materialise as in December 2008-January 2009 'Operation Cast Lead' and the siege of Gaza at the hands of the Israeli army compromised my research in Shatila (discussed in more detail subsequently).

Access to the camp was obtained through the Institute for Palestine Studies where I began working on their archives. Moreover, I was known through previous contacts and

research at the Institute in 2004. Through them I was introduced to an NGO with an office in Shatila and went through an interview in which the director of the NGO enquired about my research and aims. I fully explained the intention of my visits, information I was interested to know about the camp and the ways in which the material collected would have been disseminated or used. Once 'cleared', they accompanied me to the camp and from there my research in Shatila began.

In May's (2001: 155-156) terms, I was not a 'complete participant'. I was not doing covert research, nor was I an outsider able to be fully engaged with the activities in the camp or the camp life. Rather, I was between being a 'participant as observer' and 'observer as participant', meaning that my intentions and aims had been fully explained, but my visits to the camp were not solely for the conduct of interviews. Although I was not a participant in the activities of the NGO or in the camp life, I used to spend time walking around observing the camp and people's activities as well as observing the NGO workers and their activities. As this NGO is involved in the economic and social assistance of the people in the camp, observation and conversation with social workers offered precious insights into the camp's life and history. It also allowed me to acquire knowledge of the struggles faced by the inhabitants (such as families left with no income or support, individuals with serious health issues that cannot be cured through UNRWA or the problems of children and young people dropping out of school and education). As the social workers shared their work experiences with me, glimpses on daily difficulties for Palestinian people emerged so vividly.

Keeping a diary to record my encounters, the stories I was told and my observations in Shatila and the surrounding areas became an essential part of my fieldwork. The diary became a mixture of witnessing, observing, and interpreting the 'field' that was filtered through my eyes and senses. As notes on lives and experiences are inherently selective, fieldnotes, as Emerson *et al.* (2001: 353) suggest, are representations that 'reduc[e] just-observed events, persons and places to written accounts' (see also Rabinow, 1977: 38). What the researcher misses or includes is part of what he/she might see or perceive as different. A diary might not be about 'facts' only (provided we can easily discern facts from opinions or subjective constructions of events). Diaries could be seen as 'data' or as 'me' (Jackson in Coffey, 1999: 119). As some might be tempted to keep the 'data' and the 'me' separated in a vain attempt to give their work a nuance of objectivity, in my fieldnotes I left my 'data' enmeshed with 'me'. As the diary was meant to remain 'private', I wanted to leave my impressions guide my writing. Although it could

be argued that this was not a scientific approach as I left the 'self' encroach the 'field', it proved the right strategy in helping reveal my own biases. This did not mean that the 'me' prevailed on the 'data' in all the aspects of my research. As the 'me' influenced and described the field, I was in turn transformed and shaped by the 'data', the camp, its surroundings and my encounters as my position and research questions were constantly challenged.

After each visit to Shatila, I would write about my day in the camp, stories I was told, my observations and perceptions. As it was not intended for publication, my diary (scratch papers and digital files written in both English and Italian) was made up of statements written as a non-stop flow. Since as time goes by memory fades and details are forgotten, no attention could be paid to the use of the right word or phrase or to the production of an 'embellished' and well-thought account. Personal journals are often 'messy' in this way reflecting the confusion about the 'field', the sense of displacement and misunderstandings. They are left open-ended with multiple questions and interpretations. They are not a finished work, but an ongoing process that does not necessarily reflect coherence, careful analysis and are also tied to emotions (see also Zara, Forthcoming). I was moving from a 'realist tale', which considered events or the accounts of the people interviewed to a 'confessional tale' in which my own thoughts and reflections became central too. So as to keep myself constantly aware that I was not immune to misjudgement and partiality, I decided that I would have not re-read my notes to correct wrong statements or interpretations. I left them open, incomplete with space on the side that would have allowed me to later revise opinions and to track misinterpretations in this way leaving my biases there to remind me of mistakes. On the one hand, the pages of my diary became a reminder of situations experienced. On the other, and perhaps more importantly, those pages became reminders of the fragility of my knowledge, my failures and misjudgements. The fieldnotes became also a record of difficulties and complexities of the life of the camp as well as doing research in an environment in which people are perceived, and perhaps rightly so, as disadvantaged; a place where the researcher, coming from a much better social and economic position, has to come to terms with an unwanted, undesired and sudden sense of empowerment and, at times, the resulting great sense of guilt.

These complex power relations, emotions and perceptions of the field needed to be exposed. Although it may seem a 'confessional tale', it is part of doing more 'embodied' research with no claim to objectivity or to the right distance to observe and understand.

From the 'field' to the 'representation'

Nor is it a claim to an insider status that would not guarantee a truthful and objective account (see also Sidaway, 1992). Planned as private reflections, it became very much part of the research itself as my own way of tackling the 'crisis of representation' by revealing fragilities and failures beside successful achievements. The account of the latter, in fact, would only place the researcher on a pedestal, tripping once again on the 'god trick', on the gaze from nowhere that sees everything and, in so doing, promises objectivity (Coffey, 1999: 122-123; Haraway, 1988: 581).

Fieldnotes are not only essential as reminders of biases, but also offer preliminary analytical insights (see also Emerson *et al.*, 2001: 361). The field was affecting me. It influenced my perspectives and challenged my position and research questions. As I re-read my notes, I can clearly remember my first day in Shatila as well as my recording of thoughts and encounters when I left. The camp boundaries were not visible and only those who accompanied me to the camp for the first time could tell where the camp 'began' and 'ended'. I drew rudimentary maps and sketches to remind myself where the actual northern camp boundary was (the side from which I used to access the camp). Only a net with open access divides the northern part of the camp from non-camp areas. While I am not arguing that the camp has always been this open and accessible (during the multiple sieges of the 'War of the Camps' in the 1980s it was encircled and closed by checkpoints until the early 1990s), the present day openness needed to be investigated as well as the relation of the camp to its outside. From that very first day, I realised how this peculiar aspect of Shatila could have easily turned into a section of the thesis I was about to write investigating the openness of the refugee camp that at times is neglected (see Chapter 6). While I inevitably arrived at Shatila with my pre-packaged theoretical notions of what a refugee camp is, I let the 'field' guide my enquiry too.

Yet, other negotiations between my plans ante-fieldwork and what was actually achievable or ethically doable needed to be considered once in Shatila. Originally, in fact, I planned to also use visual methods such as photography. In order to understand the camp and the camp life through Palestinians' eyes, I planned to enrol participants in auto-photography, encouraging them to take pictures with a Polaroid camera of parts of the camp, objects or scenes that could be meaningful to them (Crang and Cook, 2007: 111-113). This could have been an interesting method to explore the ways in which the Palestinians interpret and understand their own environment. Pictures taken could have also stimulated discussions in the aftermath about what was important to them, such as events and places. Unfortunately, while not formally prevented, taking pictures in the camp

would have been problematic. It would have attracted undesired attention towards those accompanying me. Furthermore, also my taking pictures seemed not to be a wise option. Security concerns and alerts are high as the presence of informants and spies in the camps has given the Palestinians a hard time. Although some informants came from the Palestinian community, non-Palestinians are often viewed with suspicion. At the time of my fieldwork and its aftermath, news about spies in Lebanon trained and paid by Israel were common. Although this seemed to be more related to the Israel-Hezbollah ongoing hostilities and confrontations, keeping a low profile in the camp was the safest and wisest option.

While security may seem to be the first and most important concern for refusing to take pictures, I moreover felt that photographing the camp was rather unethical. As Crang and Cook (2007: 31-32) maintain, there is a difference between 'Ethics' with a capital 'E' and 'ethics' with lower case 'e', meaning that there is no unique ethics to follow. While 'Ethics' is embodied in the standardised guides of social research practices, 'ethics' is part of everyday negotiations and translation of different ways of understanding ethics according to cultures, contexts and circumstances. This means that practices that according to 'Ethics' are appropriate or recommended could even become 'unethical' in different contexts or cultures. As regards my taking pictures in the camp, even though I had obtained permission to do so and I was told that it was fine – therefore ticking the 'Ethics' box – I felt it would have been inappropriate. My very presence in the camp necessarily involved representation and reproduction of uneven power relations. I was also told that recently tourists had begun visiting the camp, perhaps in search of a bit of adventure in a site that witnessed unprecedented violence. Further voyeurism and spectacularisation would have been unethical and unnecessary.

Interviews in the camp and beyond

Original plans before fieldwork contemplated the collection of some forty semi-structured interviews with Palestinians living in Shatila. Semi-structured interviews could have given the chance for Palestinians interviewed to reply on their own terms, expanding their answers if so they wished. This was also ideal for me as I could have asked them to re-elaborate or propose other questions following their answers to deepen certain aspects that were not clear or were worth exploring more (May, 2001: 123-124; Valentine, 2005).

From the 'field' to the 'representation'

Once in the 'field', however, things did not go as planned and I needed to be as open and flexible as I could. Zahra, the social worker, accompanying me for the interviews asked me what kind of people I wanted to meet. As if respecting the cold sample requirements of social scientists preoccupied with issues of representativeness, I said that having the widest range of people – in terms of age and gender – would have been best. While a well-balanced sample was achieved, I did not manage to collect as many interviews as I originally planned. Fieldwork started as scheduled in October 2008, but events on 27th December 2008 and their aftermath made conducting research in the camp difficult and inappropriate. The siege of Gaza by the Israeli army through 'Operation Cast Lead' also had effects on the Palestinian refugee camps in Lebanon and on people's mood. The people of Shatila felt the siege personally. Everyone had their fellow Palestinians in Gaza in their minds. Discussion about any other topic was felt to be deeply inappropriate. Hence, formal recording and interviews on camp life stopped on that day with only twenty-one interviews collected in Shatila.

The ways in which participants were contacted was mainly through Zahra. These were either pre-arranged interviews or interviews with people as result of causal encounters in the streets of the camp while we were walking together. Snowballing through Zahra and other participants was fundamental to gain the trust of all the people I managed to meet and talk to in the camp as well as outside. Being introduced to someone by their relative or acquaintance automatically brought a sense of trust in me (Valentine, 2005).

While at the beginning I planned to interview Palestinians living in Shatila, once in the camp I realised how boundaries, physical and national, could easily blur. On my first day of interviews, Zahra and I visited people that were all living outside Shatila, and one encounter out of three was with a Lebanese woman. The following days I realised how the distinction between the camp and its outside was not only imperceptible and how the camp seemed to never begin or end, but also how lines categorising people were not clear-cut and definite. Palestinians lived alongside Lebanese. Intermarriages were also quite common. Living in the camp or outside of the camp seemed not making much difference as people lived and worked in Shatila as well as outside. I simply let things be. I also left Zahra's intuitions and experience guide my research and encounters: since her birth she has been living, experiencing and 'breathing' Shatila as well as the adjacent areas. She knew many Palestinians living outside the camp and commuting to the camp to work, as well as many Lebanese living inside the camp and commuting outside to work. There were no fences separating them, nor distinctions between camp and non-camp. Everything was

so fluid that my 'sample' was made up of Palestinians (mostly) as well as Lebanese, living in the camp and in its immediate proximity. This shows how social science categorisation and samples might reduce complex realities such as these to bare names, numbers and categories and, in so doing, forget to take into account processes, experiences and life itself that blur boundaries between different nationalities, citizenships and identities.

Interviews usually took place in the participant's home, a comfortable place where they (and I) could feel at ease talking. The familiarity and informality of the environment where our encounters took place needed to be preserved in the encounter itself. While getting a formal and written consent for the interviews is a recommended practice of research 'Ethics', introducing formalities in an environment that is intended to be informal would not be a wise move. Besides, refugees, who for long have been subjected to disciplinary forms of power by state authorities, might have seen such formalities with suspicion and fear while this would have undermined the trust that was reflected on me through Zahra's presence. Although I made sure that everyone knew who I was, where I was studying, the purpose of my presence as well as the use of the interviews in the dissemination of the research, a written consent signed by the participants was felt to be inappropriate and possibly a significant hindrance.

Interviews were mostly conducted in Arabic, and when possible in English and also Spanish when the participants so wished. As Desbiens and Ruddick (2006: 4) maintain, language is never neutral or placeless but always deeply entrenched in precise geographies and social and political structures (see also Desbiens, 2002). I was aware that the use of English, in particular, could have been deeply problematic and could be associated with quite unpleasant geopolitical scenarios: to the Palestinians, and many others, the British were responsible of their displacement and Nakba. Someone coming from a British University and speaking English perhaps might have not been seen as an innocent and unproblematic presence. I therefore privileged the use of Arabic over other languages.

Despite my study of Classical Arabic during my BA, I was not able to conduct interviews myself in Arabic. I knew the basics of conversation in Modern Standard Arabic or Egyptian dialect learnt through my stay in Cairo some years before (February 2003-May 2003), but these could significantly differ from the Levantine Arabic spoken in Lebanon and Palestine. Although I was also attending some courses of Levantine Arabic during my stay in Beirut, the language learnt only allowed me to introduce myself and have a basic conversation. While language and cultural fluency are preferable for the successful completion of a research project in different environments and contexts (Gade, 2001;

From the 'field' to the 'representation'

Veeck, 2001), I had to rely on the translation of Zahra who became a key mediator in the research process. The use of English or Spanish was limited to the interviewees' consent and/or desire to have a conversation in a language other than Arabic.

While conducting the interviews by myself in Arabic was preferable, the positive aspects of having a translator that comes from the same background of the participants are numerous. From a linguistic translator, Zahra became a precious cultural interpreter too. An asset for my research, she facilitated accessed to information and trust that otherwise I could not have obtained. Not only was she able to contextualise certain expressions or provide precious insights about the camp, she could also explain why some people behaved in a certain way. I clearly remember the day when we were in the house of Abdallah, a Palestinian man in his 70s. His son came in the living room during the interview. Although he kindly introduced himself when I put my hand forward to shake his, he refused to touch it while placing his hand on his chest and shaking his head. I felt embarrassed, but had also mixed feelings of anger and surprise. Why did he refuse to touch my hand? Is it because I am not Muslim? Or because I am a woman and therefore inferior? Only some days after that encounter I understood why that boy refused to touch my hand as we were about to meet a doctor and Zahra explained to me how to behave in that specific occasion. She did not know about the views of the person we met some days earlier, but she had a clear sense of the views of the doctor we were about to meet. She explained that pious religious men are not allowed to touch a woman who is not their wife, mother or sister. Simply as it was, with no harm meant on their part, these two men simply could not touch me. Until I knew the explanation, I mistook their respect for their religion, for something else or a lack of respect towards me. In this instance local translators become 'intermediaries' between different languages, people and cultural backgrounds, while my diary kept track of my misjudgements and assumptions (Bujra, 2006).

While the use of a translator may lead at times to the researcher's loss of control of the interview process, after some early frustrations for not being able to ask my 'list of questions' I decided that I had to trust Zahra. She knew what she was doing. She knew the context and the people. She understood the matters that were too sensitive and matters that she thought people would not be interested in being asked. She was an incredible asset in getting people to talk. She was pressing the right buttons at the right time and I recognised her key role in also getting people to trust me and be willing to talk to me. As discussed above, the period in which I was conducting fieldwork was particularly delicate as news about spies was spreading on an almost daily basis. Although people have been extremely

welcoming and generous, the camp population remains vigilant. Anyone pretending to be an NGO volunteer or a researcher could easily get into the camp and gain any information. Zahra's presence next to me during the interviews was a reassurance for those who opened up and talked.

Although her presence was a reassurance for the participants and a precious interpreter of extralinguistic information for me, I was aware that the use of translator must be carefully reflected upon. My knowledge of Arabic was not good enough to conduct interviews by myself, but it was enough to understand that at times translation may have not been entirely accurate. As Burja (2006: 176) points out:

> Translators are not simple ciphers without political or social views of their own. They may find it hard not to betray this in their translations, presenting one side's position with more conviction and elaboration than the other, or even contradicting the accounts that are given in order to present their own opinions.

As I foresaw these risks, I asked Zahra to provide a brief summary of answers that would have allowed me to keep the track of the conversation or ask new questions as a result of what was said. The use of tape recorder, with the consent of all participants, became essential. The transcription process would have looked at both Arabic and English texts of those conversations so as to distinguish Zahra's thoughts and opinions from the participants'. There was also the risk of Zahra missing passages in the translation process that could have been recorded and analysed in a second moment.

Beyond Shatila and its neighbourhood, other interviews were conducted with two Palestinian scholars working in Mar Elias camp (Souheil El-Natour and Jaber Suleiman); the Palestine Liberation Organisation (hereafter PLO) representative in Lebanon (Abbas Zaki); an UNRWA source; and a Lebanese official, advisor of the government. The last two sources wished to remain anonymous. Interviews with Souheil El-Natour and Jaber Suleiman took place in their offices in Mar Elias camp and were conducted in English. They have published extensively on the violation of the Palestinian refugees' human rights and camps in Lebanon. Both of them work for the improvement of the Palestinian

refugees' condition in the country (Al-Natour, 1997; El-Natour, 1993, 2003; El-Natour and Yassine, 2007; Natour, 2005; Suleiman, 1999, 2001, 2006).[1] Both of them, refugees themselves and working in the camps, could provide precious insights on the ways in which the Lebanese government has been addressing the issue of the Palestinian refugees in the country since 1948, and the ways in which security is dealt by the Palestinian factions controlling the camps and the Lebanese authorities.

While El-Natour and Suleiman, along with the interviews conducted in Shatila and adjacent areas, could also offer accounts on the life of Palestinians in Lebanon, other sources – such as the representative of the PLO, the UNRWA source and the Lebanese official mentioned above – provided more 'official' and 'diplomatic' accounts. Representing and speaking for an institution and having to justify certain policies and decisions led them to carefully weigh their statements according to their agenda or the agenda of the organisation/body for which they work. Yet, while some of them hold key positions in the management of the life of the Palestinian refugees, they themselves have no direct, or little, contact with the reality of the camps or disadvantaged Palestinians living outside the camps. For this reason, their words have been considered as providing the representation of an official account that might be unrelated to or dismissive of the reality on the ground.

Reflection in the field and after the field: Power relations and the problem of the 'truth'

'First World researchers' doing research in 'Third World countries' are faced with challenges before, during and in the aftermath of fieldwork (Sidaway, 1992; Porter, 1995). The spectre of colonialism, the presumption of knowing, and the arrogance of representing are dilemmas that we, as researchers, constantly face. 'Speaking for' – as political representation – and 'speaking about' – as description and discursive representation of other realities – are an inescapable trap that researchers need to carefully consider (Spivak, 1988). For long postcolonial and feminist theorists have been questioning the objectivity of the knowledge produced and the complex landscape of power relations that takes shape during research as well as in its aftermath through dissemination (among others see Haraway, 1988; Said, 1978; Rose, 1997). Haraway (1988) argues that objectivity can be achieved only by 'situating' our knowledge and claims. Thus reflexivity becomes a 'must'.

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[1] Differences in the spelling of El-Natour's name as reported in his publications.

From the 'field' to the 'representation'

Not only limited to the dissemination of our results, reflection should accompany each stage of our projects: from the design of the research and collection of material, to the production of knowledge. Reflexivity is paramount to contextualise and situate our claims as well as the claims of multiple texts (written, oral or visual and more) we are to analyse.

As regards the research in developing countries, Sidaway (1992: 403) suggests that the politics of the encounter with the other is a relation that needs to be reflected upon. In the complex landscape of power relations, we, as researchers, may find ourselves shifting positions. From a relatively low, middle or working class positions that we may occupy in our everyday life in the developed world, we can become '(relatively) rich' and powerful. From our offices and departments to the field, we not only travel through different geographical locations, but also through multiple social and economic scales. Moreover, we are political subjects that through our 'being there' and our freedom of movement re-install oppressive and unequal power relations of the past and the present.

Who gave me the right to be there? I can easily travel, move to different countries, even able to get visas at the arrival airports with no need to go through the hassle of slow and sometimes offensive procedures that other people with a different passport have to undergo to be able to move. I, the one who could move so freely, was facing people who did not have a passport and a recognised nationality! Who gave me the right to ask questions? A sense of inadequacy accompanied me throughout the fieldwork. The dominant position in which I found myself was at times unbearable. Questioning the morality of what I was doing was constant. While these reflections are important to the extent that they reveal the enormous disparity and inequality between the researcher and the 'researched' in certain contexts, self-indulgence is never a solution. Even though 'ethnographic honesty about such feelings is one response' to the power relation discomfort (Robinson, 1994: 223), we must always face differences and conflicts not as failures and insurmountable problems but as political spaces and opportunities to re-negotiate oppressive power relations (Rose, 1997). As Rose suggests, if the researcher feels too empowered, the solution is to redistribute power 'excesses'.

For me this redistribution and re-negotiation of power translated in the ways in which the interviews were conducted, or better, at times not even 'directed'. Although I prepared a set of questions to ask or themes to be covered, I did not force those questions. I had to listen to what people wanted to say even if at times I felt conversations were moving rather far away from my research. I appreciated the ways in which at times I was myself challenged during the interviews with expressions such as 'Now I want to ask [you] a

question!' as Yusuf, a Palestinian of Shatila, questioned my research on their life in the camps when they should not even be in Lebanon. Why was I not researching what happened in 1948?[2] I also appreciated the way in which sometimes, in a very polite way, some participants have taken the stage. For example, to show me what the Nakba and the dispossession meant to them, Mahmoud, a Palestinian in his 80s, suddenly grabbed my recorder and said:

> I am the one who has rights, who has legal rights… and someone comes to take it from me by force… But it's mine! […] This camera is hers… I can take it from her by force, but it's still her camera![3]

Some wanted to focus more on what happened on 1948, or about the 'saga' of their families (who married whom, how marriages could turn into family fights as some members of the family disapproved the matrimony). Letting them speak about what they felt like saying was my strategy to renegotiate (although never completely balance) the power relations. While at times I felt that conversations were moving far away from the information I was looking for as planned semi-structured interviews turned into open-narratives, the stories of their several displacements (in 1948 as well as during the Lebanese civil war) or the account of their families' everyday struggles and joys also revealed their relatively 'normalcy' of being a Palestinian and a refugee in Lebanon. Between the lines, one could also read definitions of what is a 'camp' to them for instance, or the difficulties of building their shelters and houses in certain periods (more so before 1969, as I discuss in Chapter 5) as well as their relationship with the Lebanese authorities or the Palestinian factions administering the camps in different periods.

Another important aspect of the research process and a key means through which to situate the knowledge we produce, as well as the one we receive from informants, is a reflection on our own positionality (Rose, 1997). This means being attentive to our own identity: the way it is constructed and the way it is 'read' by our participants. I must be aware that my identity or the place in which I may be positioned by the participants may

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[2] Yusuf, Shatila, 18 November 2008. Interview conducted in Arabic.
[3] Mahmoud, Shatila, 14 November 2008. Interview conducted in Arabic.

affect people's accounts. In Shatila and the surrounding areas where I conducted my interviews these issues became even more significant because of the different positions that my participants and I occupied in the chessboard of power relations. I was an outsider: an Italian student doing a doctoral research in a British institution on the Palestinian refugees in Lebanon. My identity or the way they may see me might have affected their account. While most of the people I had conversations with reiterated their wish to return to Palestine, I have also wondered if that was an 'official statement' on their part that would not compromise their claims on the right of return and compensation. Would they have said the same to another person? To a Lebanese or a fellow Palestinian? Were their statements reflecting their deepest desires?[4]

These kinds of reflection inevitably lead us to discuss also the positionality of the participants. We do not know the participants' intentions and agendas. As the researcher gets to choose the topic of research and the questions to ask, consciously or unconsciously participants select what to say and the way to say it. Their account may follow an agenda. As Rabinow (1977: 119) suggests, we should be careful in our analysis and consider that:

> first, [...] we ourselves are historically situated through the questions we ask and the manner in which we seek to understand and experience the world; and second, that what we receive from our informants are interpretations, equally mediated by history and culture. Consequently, the data we collect is doubly mediated, first by our own presence and then by the second-order self-reflection we demand from our informants.

My respondents might have 'stored' certain memories and events over others because they are more meaningful to them (like we all do). Some events or experiences might be emphasised while others completely excluded. Or what they say might be conditioned by the very presence of the researcher and, therefore, they tell what they think the researcher might expect to hear. In particular, one of the positive, but also negative, aspects of doing

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[4] On the ways in which researchers' identity may influence the information received see also Soukarieh, 2009 and Sayigh, 1994b: 8-9.

research in Shatila is that many academics and journalists have visited this camp before. On the one hand, people are prepared for these kinds of situations that are not new to them and they are used to talking to strangers and foreigners. On the other, they might think that all researchers or journalists want to know the same things and they might shape their account according to what they think I wanted to hear. Some may have pre-packaged their life stories. As some people I met in Shatila told me they had been previously interviewed, they may have understood what people look from them and present the researcher with a 'pre-packaged' account.

For long academics have being questioning the ways in which we can obtain and produce objective and truthful knowledge. Yet, we have to accept the fact that one truth simply does not exist. Discussing the epistemic consequences in using oral history as research methodology, anthropologist Sayigh (1994: 6) suggests that we do not have to take the accounts as historical 'facts', but just see them as historical experiences. In her investigation of the Hutu refugees in Tanzania living in the camps, for example, Liisa Malkki (1995a) refuses to look for 'truthful' statements and is not interested in verifying if the story she is told is true or not. But she is interested in the ways in which narration is constructed, what stories are used by the refugees to make sense of their past and present.

In particular, individual and collective memories play an important role in the Palestinians' accounts. Collective memories of the Nakba are constructed and preserved by the refugees to challenge the 'sanitised' history told by official accounts interested in erasing the abuse and violence that the Palestinian people endured. The strength of collective memories was particularly felt during my encounters in Shatila as I perceived the importance for the Palestinians to still talk about the Nakba in order to not forget their past and rights and to re-affirm these in front of visitors (see also McEwan, 2003: 755-757).

At the same time, collective memories are part of more fragmented stories and individual experiences that the respondent chooses to stress, tell or omit. When participants are asked to talk about their life, we cannot expect to be told the truth (as if one truth exists). Narrating one's life means constructing it and 'constructions may lead to different kinds of "truths"' as 'life stories are not and cannot be objective: they are always "artificial, variable and partial"' (Plummer, 2001: 401). This does not mean that they are not valuable, it could well be that some statement that are 'untrue', 'unrealistic' may be 'psychologically true'. The ways in which we can evaluate life stories are, as Plummer (ibid) maintains, different. We can do what he calls 'reality checks' – looking at the

'internal consistency' of the life story; we can focus on the 'narrative truths' by 'see[ing] the world through their point of view, even if this world does not "match reality"'; or life stories can be considered for the ways in which they function and we might look for 'the role they play in personal and cultural life'.

Although researchers should not make judgements on information received, it is always paramount to contextualise certain stories we may be told. While I did not judge the reliability of the people I encountered and interviewed, I reflected on the reasons why in certain cases accounts may have appeared distorted or lacking consistency. Looking at the genealogies of the account – what people chose to tell and privilege – we might realise that if the knowledge produced by researchers is partial and situated, so is the narrative produced by the participants. Whilst still revealing a narrative of predicament and struggle of the Palestinian life in Lebanon, some 'embellished' – to me – accounts of their life or fictional and fabricated identities – as we all do – were a way to produce what I call a 'cognitive resistance'. As collective memory re-instate the refugees' rights and predicament, individual truths or stories may be constructed to better justify their presence in the camp as their own choice rather than showing that their living there is an indirect obligation caused by the rampant discrimination that would not allow them to rent anything outside the camp (see Chapter 3). As my and their partial and situated knowledges met, I have always attempted to cross-reference people's stories about the same situations and events and to compare interviews' accounts and assumptions with other official accounts or anthropologists' work.

Archival research and other written secondary sources

Ethnographic practices and interviews in the camp could address the everyday Palestinian refugees' struggle. They could also reveal the multiple ways in which the refugees resist and fight back the sovereign's decision. But who is the sovereign? And what are the decisions that affect the Palestinian life? On the one hand, from informal discussions in the camp as well as interviews with refugees and the popular committee administering the camp, the governance and power relations in the camp space could emerge. On the other, as part of this research was to reveal the multiplicity of scales on which sovereign power operates, archive research became essential. In particular, I was interested in the multiscalar sovereigns' decisions as well as the politico-juridical structure of the camp, so I looked for texts and documentation that could uncover the legal status of

the camp. As different sovereigns were at stake – beyond the Palestinian factions that today administer the camp – it became essential to look for Lebanese government's and UNRWA's documentation addressing the status of the refugee camps and the land on which they have been established.

Archives are the primary source to gain historical, but also contemporary, information. Yet, we must be careful in taking for granted the truthfulness of documents and assume that their categorisation is without biases or interpretations (Foucault, 2002). As Hannam (2002b: 113) argues, '[t]he formation of archives is a characteristic of modernity that emphasised values of ordered, systematic knowledge and the scientific search for truth and classification'. The creation of archives is the outcome of governments' obsession with controlling knowledge and the knowledge of the past. But as Hannam reminds us, archives are inherently 'selective' in what could be displayed, open to the public access, but also collected, and preserved. Paraphrasing Foucault (2002), also May (2001: 177-178) stresses that documents must not be considered as 'self-evident', 'but as part of the ways in which truth is produced'. While they claim neutrality, they are deeply embedded in power relations. As a result, archives are highly contested sites that shape history and what is deemed worthy reporting and preserving, as well as reject certain knowledges and accounts.

Aware of the partiality of knowledge of archives and facing the risk of not having access to documentation I was looking for, I searched texts that could indicate the legal status of the Palestinian refugee camps in Lebanon, in general, and Shatila camp in particular. When enquiring into the legal status of the camp I have often been told that refugee camps have been established by UNRWA in conversation with the Lebanese authorities and that special agreements have been signed by both parties. During my fieldwork in Lebanon, I searched the archives of the American University of Beirut (AUB), the Institute for Palestine Studies, and ESCWA (United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia). UNRWA does not have an archive in Lebanon. Some UNRWA records are kept in the ESCWA library of Beirut, but most of the documentation is preserved in UNRWA headquarters in Amman and some files are to be found in the UN Archives in New York. My archive research in Beirut proved unsuccessful. I, therefore, attempted to obtain this information or to enquiry into the existence of such documentation during a couple of encounters with officials, but I was left with very vague answers implying that certain agreements exist but they are not public. Even my attempts to bypass the restrictions in Lebanon and to see if these agreements

could be available somewhere else proved unsuccessful as I searched the UN Archives in New York.

My last frustrating attempt to get some clarity on who could be legally responsible for the camps and their management materialised as I visited the National Archives in London. While the latter is the best primary access to British government's papers and documents, it also contains documentation pertaining to former colonies or British overseas interests (Jennings, 2006). In particular, Foreign Office folders include communication with former colonies or British embassies abroad that follow the interests of the government. Unfortunately, as Jennings (2006: 245) points out, '[u]nder British law, most official papers are closed for 30 years'. As expected some documents were classified, but I managed to retrieve letters and reports produced by and dispatched from the British Embassy of Beirut and sent to the Foreign Office of London in the late 1960s until the mid-1970s. This documentation relates to the management of the Palestinian refugee question in Lebanon as well as the Lebanese government's decision to abandon the control of the camps in 1969 with the signature of the Cairo Agreement (this material is discussed in Chapters 3 and 5).

Although the files retrieved from the National Archives were useful to understand the complexity and multiplicity of sovereign powers affecting the refugees' lives including the British interest in containing the Palestinian problem, no mention of the legal status of the land could be found. This was not forthcoming from discussions with stakeholders in Lebanon, nor was it apparent in any archive visited or explored. After a sense of failure in not being able to retrieve this information, I realised that the only way to circumscribe the obstacle was to acknowledge and examine the 'absence' of that information. If information was classified in Lebanon as well as somewhere else, the 'absence' of these documents might have said as much as their presence. This is discussed, for example, in Chapter 5 where I examine the status of the refugee camps in Lebanon.

Other secondary sources that have been used are the UNRWA statistics constantly updated in the UNRWA website as well as its working documentation that is not published on the website but is available from UNRWA's offices at request. Yet, beyond the utilisation of more official sources such as statistics and different organisations' and committees' reports on the Palestinian refugees' presence in Lebanon, I have also followed blogs and web-users' comments on news pertaining to the Palestinians refugees and refugees camps in the country. While this approach seems unscientific, popular understandings and opinions should not be underestimated. On the one hand, the inclusion

of blogs and web-users' comments could contribute to the de-subjectification of knowledge as formal and official understanding of politics are not the only way through which we come to understand the world. On the other, ordinary people's thoughts, as it is shown in Chapter 4, can even become crucial and determinant in the ways in which 'official politics and decisions' are dealt with and taken.

Analysis and translations:
An ongoing negotiation

The first step to start the analysis of the material collected (interviews as well as archive documentation) began with the transcription of the interviews. As interviews in the camps were mostly conducted in Arabic through the help of a translator, transcription of conversation in Arabic and the English became paramount. The writing down of both Arabic and English parts of the interviews would have uncovered details that the translation might have missed during the interview or render justice to what was actually said by the participants as in some occasions Zahra added information that was peculiar to her own experience or view of Shatila.

Working across languages is never a straightforward process though. Echoing Derrida, Smith (1996: 161) reminds us how translating is a necessity but also an impossibility. Words and their original meanings are lost in the passage from one language to another. Translating is betraying the original text and its nuances that could not be transplanted into another language and culture as social and political meanings differ from context to context. Translating also means 'fighting between two fires': between working on a literal word-by-word translation – facing the impossibility of reproducing the original text – and working on adaptation of meanings from one language to another bearing in mind that translating also stands for 'interpreting' (see also Bannet, 1993). When translation became necessary, I gave prominence to the meaning and the sense of people's statements and affirmations. Attempts were therefore made to maintain the translation as literal as possible. However, given the different linguistic and cultural contexts, some changes were necessary in order to maintain the sense of statements in the original language used, be it Arabic, Spanish, or Italian.

Yet, translation does not only mean moving a text from one language to another, from one cultural and social context to another. It moreover involves the translation of an

oral text (the interviews and conversations) into a written one where nuances of tone, pauses, accents, giggles, cry, silences have meanings on their own but can hardly be reproduced. In order to overcome this, I made use of punctuation to help reproduce pauses and changes of tones as well as notes aside the transcriptions that could remind me of the atmosphere of the interview, ironic or more serious tones.

As regards the analysis, interviews have been coded according to different themes. On the one hand, I was interested in understanding the ways in which sovereign power at different scales affect the Palestinians' lives. On the other, I was interested in revealing their coping strategies of survival. I, therefore, created a catalogue with themes which helped addressing and answering my research questions. The catalogue has been divided according to different main headings such as 'movements' (How did they find themselves living in Shatila camp? Was it free choice or were they forced?); 'housing/built environment' (Were they forced to reside in a certain area? How did they manage to build their houses despite the restrictions?); 'work' (How did they manage to survive deprivation?); 'family' (stories of families and marriages became insights into the refugees' everyday life in Lebanon); 'camp governance' (How is the camp administered? Who is the sovereign in the camp? Whom do they refer to in case of any problems?); 'Palestinians/Lebanese relations' (to see to what extent we can say that the camp is the spatial device that separates the refugee from the citizen); 'camp as Palestine and resistance' or 'camp as entrapment' (What is the participants' perception of the camp?); 'Palestinian bare life' or 'Palestinian resistance' (In what instances do they highlight the discrimination and manifest a sense of impotence? In what cases refugees show their ability to cope with discrimination or even physical assaults?). These headings and categorisations were accompanied by quotes and extracts from the interviews as well as extracts from my fieldnotes that helped to remember the contexts in which interviews took place.

The investigation of the camp administration, in particular, raised quite sensitive issues as some complained about the Palestinian leadership in general and the ways in which the camp security is managed (see Chapter 5). For this reason and to protect those who took part to this research, anonymity has been guaranteed (see also Oliver, 2003: 78). Although the Palestinians and Lebanese I interviewed in Shatila and adjacent areas agreed on the use of their real name, I thought that extra precaution should have been placed on my part. While some may argue that the use of anonymity might undermine their right to self-determination in the research (the use of their real name and acknowledgment of their

role), ultimate responsibility on the use of information and participants' safety always lies with the researcher who should always bear in mind potential consequences for the respondents.

The analysis of other interviews – Souheil El-Natour, Jaber Suleiman, Abbas Zaki (PLO representative in Lebanon 2006-2010), the UNRWA source and the Lebanese official – and the archive materials has been pivotal to investigate the legal and political aspects concerning the management of the refugee camps as well as the treatment of the Palestinian refugees. Representation of the camps and their alleged insecurity and instability, was explored discursively as each source provided different reasons for the 'exceptionality' of the refugee spaces in Lebanon. As governance, control and legal issues pivoting around the camp were investigated, I paid attention to the discourses that were produced and reproduced through the interviews or the documents I have analysed (on this see in particular Chapters 3 and 5).

Concluding remarks

Being a privileged academic doing research in developing countries always raises innumerable concerns about the right of being there, ask people about their exclusions, problems and violence endured and then going back home and 'speak for and about' them. Reminiscent of colonial inequalities over who might have the right to 'represent' and who is kept silenced in the research process, the inescapable problem of representation accompanied the project from its early planning until the dissemination. Being an outsider raises numerous issues. The problem of the language was particularly felt. Translation, moving from one language to another and from an oral text to a written one, is an inevitable betrayal of the original. Zahra's role in this sense was fundamental. She was not only a linguistic interpreter moving between Arabic and English, but also an incredible asset for the whole research process. From a linguistic mediator, she became a cultural translator.

Ethical concerns of doing research in the field as well as the issues of analysis and interpretations have been discussed, showing how delicate the process of getting information and interpreting what participants say is. Although it will never erase the inequality that exists on social, political and economic levels between the researcher and the researched, renegotiating power relations in the field was partially achieved through leaving participants to talk about what they more felt to talk about. Even though the

problem of representing politically and discursively – 'speaking for and speaking about' – will never be solved, in order to redistribute power excesses and reduce the gap between researcher and researched, I also left Zahra's insights and intuition guide my research too.

Conscious of these problems, writing was a process that needed careful reflection too. As Coffey (1999: 139) and Hyndman (2001: 266) suggest, fieldwork may legitimise our claims as if touching other realities could be enough to claim objectivity. Ultimately, however, we are responsible for finding patterns and interpreting the material collected. Representing is about choosing what to write, selecting what according to me and my research question is relevant. But is what I write the kind of knowledge that the participants to the research expect to see and read? In my writing I may have excluded accounts that instead are more important for those who took part to this project. Or I may have written sections that those I have encountered in Shatila might not be interested in reading at all (see Murphy and Robert, 2001).

Other negotiations needed to take place between what my participants may want to see as research results and what another audience expects to read. Research that involves the participants in all stages of the research process (from the planning of the research questions and methods, to the dissemination stage) may be difficult to implement, particularly for doctoral researches where research proposals are scripted long in advance of any fieldwork (see also Porter, 1995). In order to not claim false or unrealistic expectations, I have tried to adopt a reflective approach by rendering visible my 'authorship' (Coffey, 1999: 132). As the only way to claim or aspire to objectivity is situating our knowledges, I made myself visible as 'crafter' of the final document. Through the following pages I do not claim any objectivity or truthful representation of what being a Palestinian in Lebanon and living in the refugee camp means. I do not pretend I am in the position of presenting the Palestinian refugees' point of view or experience in a truthful and objective way. In the attempt to render visible the position of those who for long have been discriminated, excluded and put at the margins of politics while being silenced, I share a commitment in the denunciation of oppression and unequal distribution of power in which I myself am embedded in through my privileged position as Western researcher. Echoing Spivak and Gramsci, McEwan (2009: 69-70) suggests that we need to combine the 'pessimism of the intellect' – the problematisation of the possibility of fully and truthfully representing the subaltern view and agency – with the 'optimism of the will', a political commitment in striving to avoid pitfalls of 'speaking for' and 'speaking about', and striving to reduce inequality and marginalisation through more ethical ways of

researching. Perhaps not all the following pages reflect the Palestinians' thoughts about their condition. Being honest about our interpretations of other realities is perhaps the only way to situate the production of our own accounts and stories.

3- Decentering the state:

The global scope of sovereign power and the production of Palestinian bare life in Lebanon

> *While attending to the modern intensification of biopolitics, Agamben pays little heed to the changed global context in which sovereignty is set. Once you acknowledge that an ethos is internal as well as external to sovereignty, you appreciate that territorial sovereignty has always operated within global as well as an internal context.*
>
> *(Connolly, 2007: 35-36)*

The first Arab-Israeli conflict left more than 750,000 Palestinians displaced and forced to leave their homes and villages of what once was Palestine under the British Mandate. While waiting for their right of return to be implemented as sanctioned by General Assembly Resolution 194 (1948), the Palestinians have found themselves guests of neighbouring Arab countries that alternated welcoming and benevolent hospitality with harsh and confrontational relations. *De facto* and *de jure* stateless since 1948, Palestinians have been at the mercy of their hosts' moods and relying on the availability of humanitarian aid. In fact, as the main hosting countries – Jordan, Lebanon and Syria – never felt responsible for their tragedy, since 1948 humanitarian agencies such as the Red Cross first and UNRWA (United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East) later, have been 'taking care' of the refugee life. Focusing on making the Palestinians survive, humanitarian agencies are still not able to grant them a qualified and political life whose value was lost in 1948 with the proclamation of the State of Israel and the dissolution of the Mandate Palestine citizenship (Takkenberg, 1998).

While the treatment reserved for the Palestinians in each country varies, Lebanon is the one in which they face the harshest conditions. Mainly, but not exclusively, due to the

peculiar confessional character of Lebanese politics and society (as discussed in the Introduction), the presence of the Palestinian refugees has always been perceived as threatening the country's stability and order. Institutionalised discrimination and further legal abandonments materialised as the Lebanese government prevented the refugees from enjoying basic rights such as the right to work, access to health and education services. While these rights have partially been addressed and implemented by humanitarian agencies operating in Lebanon, the government has since 1948 adopted policies that have socially, economically and politically excluded the Palestinians. This marginalisation was exacerbated by the establishment of refugee camps (see Chapter 5) that physically separated the Palestinians from the Lebanese citizens.

Certainly, the Lebanese government's decisions over the last sixty years aggravated the position of the Palestinians refugees that in other countries seem to enjoy better treatments (Syria and Jordan) (Brand, 1988a; FMO, Undated a; Hanafi, 2010b; Takkenberg, 1998: 155-158, 167-169). But is Lebanon solely responsible for the production of what Agamben would define as Palestinian bare life? Most of the studies focusing on the Palestinian refugees' condition in Lebanon seem to blame the Lebanese government for the discrimination that the Palestinians endure in that country. While Lebanon's complicit role in the production of the Palestinian bare life is undeniable, further reflections and clarifications on the ways in which power and sovereign power operate is needed.

If by sovereign we mean the one that deciding on the exception creates a certain political community – the nation-state – and excludes certain lives from his protection, we might share the view that the sole responsibility for the Palestinian refugees' condition in Lebanon lies exclusively with the Lebanese government's decisions that has never included the Palestinians in its national body. Some studies relying on Agamben's figures of the sovereign and bare life have identified the sovereign with state authorities. Yet, sovereign power is a too complex notion to be reduced to the state's exclusive authority and responsibility to dispose or protect life. While sovereign's task is that to include or exclude lives in and from the normal juridical order, the inclusion/exclusion operation is not the prerogative of one single sovereign. Hence, the impossibility of identifying sovereign power with states' authorities only.

What some studies seem to overlook is the global context in which sovereignty is enacted and performed. As Connolly (2007) in the opening quote of the chapter suggests, sovereignty operates internally within a specific territorial area (and therefore over a

specific population that lives in that area), but also externally as part of the global order (see also Connolly, 2005: 148-154). The latter, in fact, is never static but is everyday negotiated, shaped and resisted at multiple geopolitical scales. While one of the main reasons for the refugees' predicament in Lebanon is certainly rooted in the peculiarity of Lebanese society and political system, also true is the fact that an important role in the production of Palestinian bare life has been played by actors other than Lebanon. Events and decisions occurring beyond Lebanon's boundaries, at the regional and international levels, have deeply influenced the Lebanese policies towards the refugees.

As sovereignty should be disengaged from sovereign statehood solely (Edkins and Pin-Fat, 2004), this chapter develops an investigation of the broader extent of sovereign power and expands the scope of enquiry to include both international and regional scales. Relying on the analysis of mainly secondary written sources and with the aim of revealing the intricate network that manages and so strongly impacts upon Palestinian life, it illustrates how power is not a prerogative of the Lebanese state only. It also argues that decisions taken beyond Lebanon's territory contribute to the depoliticisation of the Palestinians and affect their subjectivity as much as Lebanon's discriminatory laws, decrees or administrative orders. As the chapter focuses on the multiplicity of sovereign powers affecting Palestinian life, the reader may notice that refugees' voices do not appear in the following sections. The latter, however, constitute an essential part of the remaining chapters which reveal and recognise their being political and their agency.

With the purpose of showing the global extent of sovereign power in shaping the refugees' life and subjectivity, the first part of the chapter considers the international level. Starting from the international community's[1] inability to implement the refugees' right of return, it explains how this inability to find a political solution to the Palestinians' displacement led to the deployment of humanitarian organisations in the management of the refugees' life. The second section considers how Palestinian life is not only depoliticised at the hands of the international community, but also in the context of Arab countries' policies and decisions pertaining to the Palestinian cause. For a long time they have proclaimed themselves as the truest defenders of the Palestinian people and rights, but for long they have also been playing the Palestinian card to maintain their power or influence in the Middle East. The third section of the chapter examines the Lebanese context and the government's policies regarding the Palestinian refugees in the country. It

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[1] For an explanation of the use of the expression 'international community' see note 3 in the Introduction.

demonstrates how the government's decisions in particular occasions are not only the consequence of the country's peculiar political confessional system, but are the direct and indirect consequences of regional or more international events and agencies. The latter, in fact, influence the ways in which the Lebanese government responds towards its Palestinian community.

From the political to the humanitarian:
Refugees' subjectivity in formation

Protection gaps: From political life to bare life

Despite the numerous attempts to resolve the Palestinian refugees' displacement allowing them the return to their homes and villages in Palestine, Israel has since 1948 resisted and rejected the implementation of UN General Assembly Resolution 194. The return of the Palestinian refugees, especially within the newborn state's boundaries, would have certainly threatened the Jewish character of the state and its very existence as home for the Jewish people. To justify this refusal, Israel has always claimed that it holds no responsibility for their displacement and that the refugees, as labelled by the international community, are nothing but 'migrants' who deliberately decided to leave Palestine or that voluntarily decided to follow the Arab armies' orders to leave their homes and villages during the first Arab-Israeli war (Takkenberg, 1998: 14).

Although historians have shown that the causes of the Palestinian displacement are the results of a combination of different factors – massacres carried out by Jewish military organisations, fear of persecution and direct Arab Armies' command – Israel's position has yet to change (Farsoun and Zacharia, 1997: 130-137; Sayigh, 2007). Even pressures to guarantee the refugees' return from the United States – widely known for their support of the Jewish state politically, economically and militarily – or suggestions of the UN Mediator for Palestine, Count Folke Bernadotte, back in 1948 found nothing but deaf ears (Chomsky, 2001; Takkenberg, 1998). As the implementation of the right of return could not be imposed without Israel's consent, the political solution to their predicament has remained suspended and, as a consequence, what was deemed to be a temporary displacement soon turned into a more permanent emergency.

Decentering the state: The global scope of sovereign power

In the neighbouring Arab countries of Lebanon, Jordan and Syria and in the West Bank and Gaza Strip – until 1967 administered respectively by Jordan and Egypt – the first relief operations were carried out by the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC), the League of the Red Cross Societies (LRCS), and the American Friends Service Committee (AFSC). This was in conjunction with the UN Relief Palestine Refugees (UNRPR), the UN agency responsible for coordinating the humanitarian assistance provided to the displaced, which was operative until 1950 when it was replaced by UNRWA (Takkenberg, 1998: 19-24).

Facing the impossibility of repatriating the refugees, the international community and the UN began considering the option of a permanent resettlement of the refugees in the neighbouring Arab states. Following consultations with special commissions and committees established to find a feasible solution to the refugees' predicament, the UN suggested that the first step towards their naturalisation in the neighbouring Arab countries should have been based on economic programs. The UN, in fact, firmly believed that the combination of development programmes from which the rising economies of the Middle East would have benefitted along with the creation of job opportunities for the refugees to alleviate the economic burdens on hosting countries, would have convinced governments to accept the Palestinians' naturalisation (pp. 26, 29-30).

It is in this context that we must understand the establishment of UNRWA through General Assembly Resolution 302 (IV) of December 8, 1949.[2] As Bowker (2003: 124) points out, 'it appears likely that the main reason for establishing UNRWA was to foster stability among Arab states while working to integrate the Palestinian refugees in their new locations'. With the aim of improving the chances of the refugees' assimilation in the host countries and to prepare the region for the moment in which humanitarian relief and assistance would have ceased, UNRWA's duties according to Resolution 302 (IV) were as follows:

> a) To carry out in collaboration with local governments the direct
> relief and works programmes as recommended by the Economic
> Survey Mission;

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[2] For the full text of the Resolution, see the United Nations website at http://www.un.org/documents/resga.htm (last accessed August 2011).

> b) To consult with the interested Near Eastern Governments concerning measures to be taken by them preparatory to the time when international assistance for relief and works projects is no longer available;[3]

However, as much as the right of return was a politically sensitive issue for Israel, the naturalisation of the Palestinians in the Arab countries hosting them was a highly sensitive matter that could not be implemented without the consent of the governments involved. Despite these attempts to 'sugar the pill' for the Arab states hosting the refugees by providing job opportunities for the refugees and development programs for the states, Lebanon and Syria, in particular, strongly opposed the Palestinians' integration (Takkenberg, 1998). Having to face both Israel's and the Arab governments' refusal to accept the refugees, UNRWA, from a 'Works Agency', as its acronym would suggest, assumed control of the humanitarian aspect. Its mission was limited to the provision of rations, health care and education to refugees living in Lebanon, Syria, Jordan, the West Bank and the Gaza strip where refugees' presence was more significant than in other Middle Eastern countries. The humanitarian relief was therefore seen as a valid substitute for the political solution further manifesting the depoliticisation of the Palestinian life.

While the Palestinians, during the British Mandate era, could enjoy the rights deriving from the Palestinian citizenship and the diplomatic protection that the mandate power could grant them, the moment the state of Israel was proclaimed on 15 May 1948 and the British troops withdrew from Palestine, citizenship and protection automatically ceased to exist. Whereas Palestinians who remained within the newborn state boundaries and who never left their homes were included in the laws regulating the acquisition of the Israeli nationality, those who fled, found themselves refugees in foreign countries, were prevented the return, and lost rights and protection that only a citizenship status could grant (Takkenberg, 1998: 53, 178-183).

The loss of citizenship rights coincided with the production of Palestinian bare life because a politically qualified life could only be identified with the belonging to a national community and the possession of a formal citizenship. In 1948, the bareness of their life was not only proved by their displacement and lack of protection, but has been exposed since the nation-state system accords political subjectivity to citizens only. As Arendt

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[3] Ibid.

(1968) and Agamben (1995a, 1995b, 1998) have suggested, no one better than the refugee could embody the cracks and leakages of the nation-state system. Losing a nationality, as in the case of Palestinians, means the loss of human rights as '[t]he Rights of Man, supposedly inalienable, proved to be unenforceable whenever people appeared who were no longer citizens of any sovereign state' (Arendt, 1968: 292-293). According to this reading, only if national rights are re-established – through the creation of a Palestinian state or the naturalisation of the refugees in the hosting countries – could human rights and protection be enjoyed again.

However, the political value of the Palestinian life was also lost through a process that involved multiple actors including the international community, the United Nations and the *traveaux preparatoirs* of conventions and statutes of agencies dealing with the refugees more broadly. As Takkenberg (1998) suggests, while the preparatory works for the draft of the 'Convention Relating to the Status of the Refugees' (1951), the 'Convention Relating to the Status of Stateless Persons' (1954) and the statute of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) have been rather controversial, the decision not to include the Palestinians from the benefits and protection they might have enjoyed from these conventions and the attached bodies – UNHCR – was almost an unanimous one. If we take the 'Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees' as an example, the refugee is any person that:

> […] owing to wellfounded fear of being persecuted for reasons of race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social group or political opinion, is outside the country of his [sic] nationality and is unable or, owing to such fear, is unwilling to avail himself [sic] of the protection of that country; or who, not having a nationality and being outside the country of his [sic] former habitual residence as a result of such events, is unable or, owing to such fear, is unwilling to return to it.[4]

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[4] For the full text of the convention see the UNHCR website at http://www.unhcr.org/3b66c2aa10.html (last accessed November 2011).

Decentering the state: The global scope of sovereign power

While the convention seems to include, at least formally, the Palestinian refugees because of their inability to return to their homes and the lack of protection that should be granted by a state, the exclusion from the protection that bodies such as the UNHCR could have guaranteed comes in the following lines where the text declares:

> This Convention shall not apply to persons who are at present receiving from organs or agencies of the United Nations other than the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees *protection or assistance* (emphasis added).[5]

As Takkenberg (1998) goes on to say, the same kind of exclusion of the Palestinians on the ground that they are already receiving 'protection or assistance' from another UN agency is applied to them in the UNHCR statute and in the 'Convention Relating to the Status of Stateless Persons'. It goes without saying that protection and assistance are not interchangeable or synonymous as the first provide diplomatic and physical protection, while the second is associated to the humanitarian intervention. However, everybody involved in the drafting process of the conventions and the UNHCR statute agreed on the fact that Palestinians represented a separate case that needed special attention. Although there is no guarantee that these conventions could actually provide the protection needed by any refugee or stateless person beyond the Palestinian refugees' case because of the weak international law system and the right of sovereign states to decide whether to sign and apply the said conventions, the decision not to include the Palestinians in these organs and provisions left them with no representation, no legal protection and literally abandoned by law. They were not only abandoned by Western democracies that deemed the Palestinian refugees a special case deserving special attention, but also abandoned by their own 'brothers'. Unwilling to equate the Palestine refugee question with any other situation of refugeeness, the governments of Lebanon, Egypt and Saudi Arabia, in particular, pressed for the exclusion of the Palestinians both from the conventions relating to the refugees and stateless as well as the UNHCR statute. According to them, and also subsequently according to the PLO that was established only in 1964, the inclusion of the Palestinians in those conventions and in the mandate of UNHCR would have neglected the

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[5] Ibid.

political significance of the injustice they endured. In particular, the implementation of the right of return as envisioned by the 'Convention Relating to the Status of the Refugees' is an individual right that would obscure the collective nature of the Palestinians as a people with self-determination rights (ibid).[6]

Left with no protection whatsoever, refugees and stateless at the same time, nobody better than the Palestinians could embody the figure of *homo sacer*, stripped of any political and juridical value as any right and protection have been taken away from them. As the materialisation of Agamben's understanding of the exception according to which '*[t]he originary relation of law to life is not application but Abandonment*', the sovereign, or better the multiple sovereigns, prove themselves clearly not in their applicability of the law but in their exclusion of certain lives from its protection (Agamben, 1998: 29; emphasis in the original).

In the case of the Palestinian refugees we are witnessing the production of a double exclusion and exception. On the one hand, they are excluded from the nation-state system and denationalised through the creation of the state of Israel not followed by the establishment of a Palestinian state. On the other, they are excluded from the mandate of UNHCR that could have 'replaced' the legal and diplomatic protection that a state could and should have guaranteed. Instead of having an inclusion by virtue of an exclusion (as the Agambenian inclusive exclusion would imply), the double exception applied to the Palestinian refugees further restricted the ways in which life can be lived. As the political value of their life is neglected through the double exception, Palestinian refugees were left only with the pure management of their life at the hands of humanitarian organisations: UNRWA since 1950 when it became operative and other NGOs that provide assistance and relief. The political solution to their predicament and the comprehensive regional peace was abandoned in favour of a mere keep-them-alive strategy.

The inclusive moment, that follows the double exclusion, must be identified through the care provided by the humanitarian agencies since 1948. As the international community and the UN are responsible for the double exclusion of the Palestinian life from a qualified political life, humanitarianism reveals as deeply implicated in this process. If it is true that '[t]he separation between humanitarianism and politics that we are experiencing

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[6] While some would argue that the body in charge of the protection of the Palestinians would be the United Nations Conciliation Commission for Palestine (UNCCP), which among other tasks was established to work for the implementation of the right of return, since 1952 this agency has ceased to operate towards the return of the refugees. Its mission today is that of merely keeping the registration records of properties and losses of the Palestinian refugees in the event a compensation to the refugees would be agreed upon in the future (Akram, 2001, 2002; Bitar, 2008).

today is the extreme phase of the separation of the rights of man from the rights of the citizen', also true is the fact that humanitarianism and politics are not that separated and independent (Agamben, 1998: 133). As the UN and the international community strip the Palestinians of their rights by revealing their bare life, humanitarian organisations capture and further expose the very bare life they should protect and save through relief programs and rations that aim at making them survive but not live. As sovereign power abandons and excludes the refugees, the inclusion of their life is left to the humanitarian agencies who reveal their intimate link with the sovereign as they further contribute to the denudation of a life already stripped of its political and juridical value by a state or, as in the case of the Palestinians, its absence.

As 'movable sovereignties' (see Pandolfi, 2000, 2003), ready to run after each and every emergency around the world and to provide relief and assistance, humanitarian organisations are caught in the net of the nation-state interests and act as what French anthropologist Agier (2003, 2011) has labelled the 'left hand of the Empire'. The right hand of the Empire strikes by deciding on the exclusion that renders life bare, killable and disposable; a humanitarian left hand heals, cures, corrects and makes live (Agier, 2011: 200). Apparently outside the sphere of a sovereign power that decides on the life and death of people, and apparently separated from the political arena, these organisations disclose their complicit role in the production of expendable lives as the humanitarian is not separated from the political: the humanitarian becomes the essential instrument of the political (Abu-Zahra, 2005; Bocco, 2009; Hardt and Negri, 2000: 35-37; Loesher, 1999).

Beyond the 'geopolitical' motivations of preserving the *status quo* and the nation-state system, the link between the humanitarian and the political is unveiled by the fact that the sovereign decision on life and death is not a prerogative of states or political institutions only (see Caldwell, 2004; Hyndman, 2000; Lui, 2002; Soguk, 1999: 190). The same operation is performed within refugee camps and refugees' bodies by the same humanitarian organisations who can decide whom to 'save' and whom to 'let die' because they are too old, too ill, too undesirable. These kinds of decisions on life and death resemble the pure administration of life occurring in the concentration camps, where officers and guards were called to make a decision on whose life was worth living because it is productive and essential to the growth of the Nazi economy, and whose life could be lost with no grief and with impunity.

As much as sovereign power produces bare life and shapes new subjectivities and objects of intervention, humanitarian assistance also manages and administers bare life by

drawing lines through operative definitions that include who might be in need and exclude those that can be abandoned. In this context we should examine the ways in which Palestinian refugees, already excluded from the diplomatic protections of states and the international community, were included in the mandate of UNRWA and had the right to receive its services.

While UNRWA became operative only in 1950, other agencies before – such as the League of the Red Cross Societies (LRCS) – took care of the registration process to provide those in need with tents, rations or medical services. However, registering the Palestinians was not an easy task: not all of them could prove their identity because of the lack of documents; no definition adopted could easily distinguish between the temporary or permanent Lebanese migrants in Palestine before 1948 and the Palestinians who lived in Palestine ever since (Sfeir, 2008: 136). It was also difficult for these organisations to separate the 'real' Palestinian refugees from the poor Lebanese of South Lebanon where most of these registrations took place. This was because of the proximity to the Israeli-Lebanese border, area in which refugees remained for a considerable amount of time before moving elsewhere in the country. The lack of transparency and adequacy in the registration process is demonstrated by the fact that while some Lebanese managed to register with these organisations and thus benefit, some Palestinians never did so. As some considered their condition only temporary, they decided not to register, convinced they could provide for their own survival until the return was allowed. Others preferred not to register as they were too ashamed of their condition as refugees and displaced people unable to provide for themselves and their families (Bocco, 2009; Sfeir, 2008).

When UNRWA became operative in 1950, methods of registrations were not so clear. Working definitions aimed solely at humanitarian relief have always been preferred to proper legal definitions that might have had political and juridical consequences (i.e. right of return above all). When UNRWA started its operations, not only did it inherit the registers of the humanitarian agencies operating before, but also working definitions that included anyone in need of assistance. It is in this context that some Lebanese were passed from the registers of the League of the Red Cross Societies to those of UNRWA. As the name of the UN agency also suggests, UNRWA had been established to take care not of the Palestinian refugees – meaning former Arab citizens of Palestine under the British Mandate – but all those that for one reason or another found themselves in Palestine at the moment of the conflict and had been displaced losing their means of livelihood and house. While this opened up the possibility for non-Palestinians to register, this chance was

precluded to Palestinians that did not register in the first years of UNRWA operations – because wealthy enough, being helped by relatives or ashamed to do so – and could not register later on as the agency by the mid-1950s closed the registration process.[7]

While a detailed investigation of the refugees' registration process is beyond the scope of this enquiry, it is worth noting that as statistics seem to constitute the basis of certain policies affecting the Palestinians in Lebanon, UNRWA registrations and numbers will never reflect the actual number of Palestinian refugees residing in Lebanon and do not reflect the actual needs of the Palestinians. As working definitions based on economic and assistance needs have been preferred to comprehensive legal and political definitions of what being a Palestinian refugee means, it seems that these registrations also prove the failure of the humanitarian solution. Whereas the humanitarian approach was meant to substitute the political solution of the refugee issue, the inability to address even the humanitarian needs of the refugees further reveal the intimate relation holding together a sovereign power deciding on the exception and a biopower concerned with the survival of a population.[8]

Humanitarian biopower: Shaping refugees' subjectivity

As discussed, we are increasingly witnessing humanitarian organisations' complicit role in the sovereign decision. The 'left hand of Empire', as much as the sovereign power that draws lines, holds the prerogative of the decision on the life and death of the millions of Palestinian refugees in the Middle East and elsewhere. The naming, classification, enumeration and categorisation process represents political choices that aim to include some and exclude others as humanitarianism, conceived and set up to 'undo' or 'repair' the wrongs of the 'right hand of the Empire', has instead 'a major role in the transformation of individual lives, of social and cultural models, in the places where it operates' (Agier, 2011: 5).

Humanitarian interventions aim to make the refugees live producing them as bare life to be saved with no 'political voice' (Edkins, 2000:50), but their role in constructing and shaping new subjectivities and perceptions of the self should not be underestimated. It is important to remember that although Palestine before 1948 experienced an economic transition that particularly hit the rural communities and the agricultural sector which

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[7] For an excellent analysis on refugees' registrations, see Takkenberg, 1998: 68-83.
[8] For other insights into biopower as 'supplement' of sovereign power see Neal, 2005a and Tagma, 2010.

succumbed to the introduction of new machinery and capitalist modes of production, the Palestinians before the Nakba were independent and could rely on their own means to live with dignity (Sayigh, 2007). After 1948 the situation was reversed and suddenly they found themselves without a home, without their land on which for centuries they had relied for their subsistence, and displaced in another country that, despite some early welcoming and help, treated them like aliens. It was not only the loss of their homes and lands. As Sayigh (2007) argues, a deeper sense of loss infiltrated their minds and bodies as if that physical displacement was as unsettling as the temporary loss of the self, their path and identity. It is in this context that the humanitarian aid acted on and shaped their subjectivities. From being independent and self-reliant, they became passive receivers of aid and relief (p. 134).

The provision of aid and, in particular, of rations aimed at 'the subjective transformation of the displaced from angry, potentially volatile refugees to docile recipients of food aid' (Peteet, 2005: 76). However, for the Palestinians in Lebanon and elsewhere, being referred to as 'refugees' was a constant shame as their conditions implied 'powerlessness, denationalisation, and the disdain of being charity cases' (p. 124). Accepting the assistance and the rations from the Red Cross and UNRWA was, and for many of them still is, a humiliation that they endured every single day because of their inability to provide for themselves and their families. Not only did they have to go through the embarrassment of receiving food, but as Peteet (2005) points out, the food received was a constant reminder of their refugee condition and impossibility of working their own lands.

Rations, the way through which humanitarian organisations penetrated the refugees' body, became the expression of a power that drew lines separating survival from starvation through the meticulous calculations of the amount and type of food needed by the Palestinians. In the 1970s, for instance, Howley (1975: 50-51) reported that:

> [t]he refugees continue [...] to be supplied a basic ration of 1,500 to 1,600 calories per day. This ration consists of 79 percent of flour, 5 percent pulses, 5 percent sugar, 4 percent rice or burghol and 7 percent oils and fats. In the winter it is supplemented by 300 grams of pulses and 500 grams of dates.

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As Howley goes on to say, these figures are much lower if compared to the calories consumed by people living in other regions of the Middle East or the United States. Moreover, they entailed an unbalanced diet that lacked important nutritional items such as meat, fruit and vegetables (Khalidi and Majaj: 1963; UNRWA, 1961: 3). While this was the ration calculated for the 'average refugee' that aimed to 'keep body and soul together' (UNRWA cited in Howley, 1975: 52), other supplements were provided for categories of people classified as more in need than others. Drawing lines within lines as further fragmentation of the refugee body occurred, classified as more vulnerable refugees, children, women and the sick were included in special nutritional programs that provided supplements to the average diet and extra doses of powdered milk. Yet, the problem relating to the rations was not only confined to the quantities of food and calories that the refugees received as a secondary and equally important issue, was also the provision of 'culturally inappropriate foods' that Palestinians were not used to consuming before (Peteet, 2005: 77). This was not only associated with the hypothetical humanitarian workers' lack of knowledge of their traditions including their culinary customs. There were also other more latent cultural and political implications. As Peteet (2005) argues, in Arab societies more broadly, and in Palestinian society in particular, the acceptance of any form of help – money, food, shelter, gifts – is always reciprocated with loyalty. In this context, receiving food for free might have been perceived as highly problematic because accepting the rations and the help of the humanitarian organisations and UNRWA had to be reciprocated with the acceptation of their displacement and the abandonment of their right of return.

While, to some, receiving the rations triggered the fear of having to reciprocate the humanitarian relief by compromising their political rights, for others UNRWA rations and assistance were seen as the UN's way to pay their debts to the refugees for the predicament caused to them through the issue of the Partition Plan in 1947. According to this reading, some managed to compromise the acceptance of the rations justifying this on the ground that it was simply the UN duty to pay the refugees back for what they had done (Howley, 1975: 58).

Whereas biopower penetrating bodies was so evident with the provision of the rations that affected the refugees' perceptions of the self and their role in society, other forms of biopower were performed in the sphere of education. Relief and assistance, in fact, were not confined to food, shelter and medical aid only. Since the early years of its operations and in cooperation with UNESCO, UNRWA opened elementary schools in the

camps or in their proximity. However, due to the limited availability of funds and rather than coming up with targeted syllabi for the Palestinian people, the UN agency decided to opt for curricula adopted in the host countries. As Ernst (1989: 91) points out, 'this meant using Jordanian curriculum in UNRWA schools in Jordan and the West Bank, the Egyptian curriculum in the Gaza Strip, the Syrian curriculum in Syria, and the Lebanese curriculum in Lebanon' (see also Alami, 1996). This further fragmented an already geographically divided community through the teaching of subjects that never considered the history of Palestine and the reasons for their displacement. As so well explained by Turki (1972: 58) who, in his childhood and youth, experienced the displacement as refugee living in a refugee camp of Beirut:

> The schools that UNRWA sponsored were designed – unwittingly or not, no one can say – to raise Palestinian children on, and educate them in, accepting their plight in life as a preordained thing. They degraded the minds of the Palestinian youngsters and trained, indeed pressured, them into viewing their reality as the norm of existence, never transcendable in its dimension. They were taught about and given as a model a world where their destiny was left in the hands of the others; a worlds and a society with directions that they did not understand and were growing up unable to reconcile to the order they saw around them. No attempt was made to explain the situation and the forces behind it that ruled their lives, or how they were supposed to respond to them. They were thus made more defenceless. No courses were offered to show where they came from, the history of Palestine, who the Jews, who the Zionists, who the Arabs were. No reasons were offered to explain why Palestinian children were studying the American Civil War, the invasion of Russia by Napoleon, and the defeat of the Spanish Armada – rather than the story of their own civilisation and cultural heritage, so rich in literature and ideas.

While UNRWA justified its decision to make the refugees study other subjects and other histories on the ground of economic shortages, it is obvious that education was, and still is, a highly sensitive and political matter. Teaching them their history and the history of their homeland would have certainly created a highly politicised community ready to stand up for their rights and ready to fight back. From Turki's words one can certainly capture the disappointment in realising that certain subjects imposed and certain histories omitted in the curricula were intended to make the refugees forget about their origins, identity and rights.

As the depoliticisation of the refugee's life also went through the erasure of Palestinian history and identity, school curricula were not only a concern for the Lebanese.[9] Nor did they represent a concern confined to the question of Palestine only. Broader geopolitical considerations conflated into the schools set up in the Palestinian refugee camps in the Middle East and deeply affected the ways in which education was provided. During the Cold War, when the fear for the rise and spread of Communism was at its highest, other countries were particularly concerned about the subjects taught in school as well as priests' sermons. In a confidential letter reporting on the situation of the refugee camps in Lebanon and schooling for the Palestinian children sent by the British chancery of Beirut to the Middle East Secretariat of the Foreign Office of London, the British Representative in Lebanon, Mr. Highwood reports that:

> In regard to anti-Anglo-American work for the refugees, the Red Cross official, who is Orthodox, told me that the Orthodox priest in charge of Tyre is indoctrinated with Communist ideas and has a group of young men as followers. A political group has been working hard to stimulate anti-British feeling with the result that Miss Fitzpatrick of the British Syrian Mission has had an uncomfortable time. [...] The LRCC[10] representative there [Tyre area], who was a magistrate in Acre, has done splendid work and is doing much to improve feelings towards Anglo-Saxon efforts [...] I understand that conditions are improving. I have thought it worth telling the LRCC officials that the fact must be faced that *Great*

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[9] For education as a Lebanese concern, see also Brynen, 1990: 25-27.
[10] Unfortunately, I was not able find what LRCC stands for.

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> *Britain and the United States have for humanitarian reasons contributed most to the welfare of the Palestinian refugees* and all those that work to destroy these acts of humanism are pursuing no other end than to create disruption for sinister purposes contrary to the interests of the refugees (emphasis added).[11]

The concluding remarks of the letter provide suggestions to be put in place to fight the anti-Anglo-American sentiments:

> I am of the opinion that heavy-handed propaganda against Communism and the distribution of pamphlets will meet with no success and would at the moment embarrass those who are working on the spot for our best interests. I believe that the schools when they are going well will be the ground on which *we can gently work through interesting films and a production of the right kind of books* (emphasis added).[12]

These words are highly representative of British, as well as American, interests in the area and the refugees' education on multiple levels. On the one hand, Great Britain wanted to provide the refugees with a washed and well polished image of British intentions and be depicted as the power that along with the United States is 'taking care' of their needs the most, for which refugees should therefore be grateful. On the other, beyond the fact that this might have softened the refugees' position towards Great Britain, the United States or even the UN which were complicit in the Palestinians' plight, the involvement in specific programs and subjects to be taught in schools was functional in the context of the Cold War. As Communism and its spread was 'fought' at the diplomatic level, civil society was not spared from the world's bipolar division and indeed involved and indoctrinated on the 'rights' and 'wrongs'. Light propaganda programs could be delivered through the showing of specific films or documentaries that could have induced the refugees to support the West

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[11] FO 371-75328, 'Refugee Camps in Lebanon', 1949, the National Archives (London), letter dated 10 July 1949 sent by (Sgd.) R. W. Highwood (British Representative in Lebanon) to a Minister (unknown).
[12] Ibid.

in its struggle against the Soviet Union and its Communist satellite allies and, indirectly, accept their condition as the West, more than anybody else, was providing relief and assistance for them. The fact that Great Britain and the United States were focusing so much on the humanitarian aid more broadly, and in the education sector in particular, shows how even the programs and subjects the refugees were taught at school were part of a broader picture and aim. Refugees had to turn their anger towards the West that caused their predicament into gratitude because of the tents, food, medical care and schooling provided. They had to be transformed from independent beings into passive and powerless receivers of rations for their survival, and taught lessons to make them support a certain alignment or make them accept their condition.

Rations and a certain kind of education and indoctrination were the means through which biopower as performed by the humanitarian organisations and UNRWA penetrated the refugees' bodies and consciences. For a sovereign power deciding on the non-political value of their life as they were stripped of their rights – self-determination, return, compensation and protection – there was a biopower ready to supplement and back the sovereign decision through the provision of humanitarian aid and care. However, as we shall see in the next chapter, whilst these attempts were very well planned and to some extent effective in shaping the refugees' subjectivity and self perception, they could not transform them for good as different forms of resistance began rising.

Interweaved biopolitics:
From global to local impacts on Palestinian life

The regional context: Palestinian life between Arab unity and interests

As I have argued, Palestinian refugees lacked any form of diplomatic and legal protection. Especially in the countries in which they found refuge, they have been subjected to a power that neglected their political rights and claims in favour of a humanitarian approach that, putting their bare life at the centre of its concerns, focused on making them live, or better, survive. The neglect of the Palestinians' political life and value was not only a consequence of the international community's decisions. It was also a consequence of the impact and effects of Arab countries' agency, decisions and policies at the point that so often made the Palestinians feel like pawns in the hands of Arab regimes'

games and interests. Concerned with the problem of maintaining their powers and positions in a delicate moment of the Middle East history, countries like Lebanon, Syria, Jordan and Egypt used the Palestinian predicament for their own calculations. As Brynen (1990: 21) suggests, in their emphasis on the importance of Arab unity, a strong 'vocal support for the Palestinian cause became a central element of both domestic legitimacy and regional foreign policy'.

In the aftermath of the first Arab-Israeli war, the Palestinians found themselves displaced with no piece of land left for them and for the reconstruction of their fractured society. Under the administration of different Arab countries, their destiny was fragmented and inevitably interweaved to that of their Arab hosts. They had no free land from where to start their resistance and no freedom to pursue their return and the establishment of a Palestinian homeland. The Palestinian cause, however, had always resonated in all Arab leaders' speeches as it has always been representing the quintessential example of old and new imperialist projects at the expenses of the Arab nation/s. Yet, not only was the Palestinian predicament a symbol of the umpteenth imperialist attempt to oppress the Middle East and its inhabitants; the Palestinian cause stood for the road towards the unification of the Arab nation that could be achieved only once Palestine was liberated and all the Arab people united.

Despite the ephemeral support, all Arab states, especially those sharing a border with Israel, have always been cautious in waging wars of liberation for the sake of the Palestinians and have always tried to strictly control the Palestinians' movements and activities (Kapeliuk, 1969). Only when this control on Palestinians' activities could not be performed any longer unless ready to face the protest of their own public opinion, Arab states began to timidly sponsor the Palestinian cause through economic and military aid. This step was also essential in order to intervene in Palestinian internal affairs and to control the different militant and political groups. The latter, being sympathetic to one regime or another deeply contributed to the further fragmentation of the Palestinian political body (see Cobban, 1984; Nassar, 1991: 115-148).

It is in this context that we should understand the establishment of the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) in 1964, a move that aimed at better controlling the rising Palestinian national sentiments 'to contain potential nationalist pressures among Palestinians within manageable proportions' (Brynen, 1990: 22). It was an organisation that no one in the Arab world wanted to see as acting independently from the chorus of anti-imperialist struggles affecting every state in the Middle East after the defeat of the

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Arab armies against Israel and years of foreign domination that culminated with British and French protectorates and mandates in the Middle East and North Africa Arab countries.

All these struggles left the Palestinian refugees with no effective political representation for a long time. The PLO, the only organisation that could have intervened on their behalf, at least until 1967 was highly dependent on the mood of Arab states and their interests. Despite the fact that the Palestinian cause and the solution of the refugees' predicament have always been perceived as the road to the pan-Arab unity and the struggle against imperialist forces, as Owen (2004: 61) argues, the Palestine cause had also a strong power to also divide the Arab regimes interested in strengthening their national interests and influences in the region.

Despite the desire of unity for a greater Arab nation that could include all the present day states in the Middle East (Egypt, Syria, Jordan, Iraq, Lebanon and former Palestine), rivalries between newly founded states were fought on the issue of Palestine and on the Palestinian refugees abandoned because of foreign policies and internal interests. It is widely accepted that both Egypt and Syria have used the Palestinians by showing their support for them against the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan. The latter was, and still is, considered as a puppet in the hands of Western countries and a traitor to the Palestinian cause because of its attempt to annex the West Bank and to 'erase' the Palestine question and people by granting the refugees Jordanian citizenship (Brand, 1988b: 22-25). In addition, Egypt's and Syria's rivalries came to the surface at the expense of the Palestinians and their rights. While Egypt supported the creation of the PLO, it also wished to control the organisation; Syria, meanwhile, supported the newborn militant Fatah group – at the time still independent from and opposed to the PLO – by opening training camps in its soil and demonstrating the true support of the Syrian government for the Palestinian cause and the liberation of Palestine (Cobban, 1984; Owen, 2004; Peretz, 1994). However, what contributed the most to the abandonment of the Palestinian refugees was perhaps the fragmentation of the Palestinian political and military organisations as each Arab state supported their own guerrilla movement or created groups sympathetic to their policy and stand, one of which was Saiqa established in Syria in 1966. The PLO became more independent only in 1969 when Yasser Arafat, leader of Fatah, became the new chairman of the PLO. Arafat was capable of using Arab moods and concerns in the Palestinian movement's best interest as well as able to unite, at least for a while, all Palestinian efforts for the liberation of the homeland. It is only from this moment that the

Palestinian refugees, especially those in Lebanon, could enjoy some diplomatic protection and political representation also within the international community forums (see for instance, Arafat, 1975).

Between national concerns and broader influences: Palestinian bare life in Lebanon

If we accept that among all the Arab countries hosting the Palestinian refugees since 1948 Lebanon is the one in which they found the most hostile treatment, one of the main reasons for their predicament must be sought in the delicate confessional balances that characterise the Lebanese state since its establishment in 1920 (Salibi, 1965, 1988). While in other Arab countries the Palestinian refugees have been treated on an equal footing with nationals or were, to some extent, integrated, Lebanon represented a thorny reality for all those that found refuge there. As the refugee population amounted to some ten percent of the total Lebanese population, the presence of such a high number of refugees, mostly Sunni Muslim, has always been perceived as a political, identity and security threat for a country whose balance rests on weak confessional compromises and equilibriums.

While sectarian divisions and rivalries have always been present in the area that today is part of Lebanon, these have been exacerbated and politicised during and in the aftermath of the French Mandate over present day Syria and Lebanon which was officially assigned by the League of Nations in 1920. As the mandatory power had an interest in creating an entity always in need of supervision and help, the arbitrariness with which Lebanon's boundaries have been defined has always been a matter of strong contention. The autonomous former Ottoman province of Mount Lebanon predominantly, although not solely, inhabited by Maronite and Druse communities became part of Greater Lebanon as other provinces, mainly inhabited by Muslims, were annexed: South Lebanon, the North, the Bekaa Valley on the east, and the coastal towns of Beirut, Saida, Tyre and Tripoli (see Figure 1).[13] The artificial creation of Greater Lebanon in 1920 by the French authorities had to include enough Christians as to justify the creation of a state independent from the rest of Arab provinces, but also enough Muslims as to legitimise the continuous control and interventions to protect the Christian communities. The latter in fact, while representing the demographic majority in Lebanon – as according to the 1932 census – still

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[13] The city of Saida is also known by the name Sidon.

represented a minority in a Middle East that for centuries had been ruled by Arab caliphates and the Ottoman Empire (Hudson, 1997; Peretz, 1994; Salibi, 1965, 1988; Traboulsi, 2007).

Figure 1: Map of Greater Lebanon including the province of Mount Lebanon (Mutasarrifiyah) and later annexations (in Traboulsi 2007: 42).

As Salibi, one of the most accredited Lebanese historians, affirmed, this artificial creation had serious consequences as 'to create a country is one thing; to create a nationality is another' (Salibi, 1988: 19). The divide-and-rule system was a strategy that was not merely geographical, but also applied to the inhabitants of the newborn state. Rather than contributing to creating a common sense of identity, the mandatory power further stressed differences, and encouraged sectarian divisions and rivalries also supporting the political ascendancy and supremacy of some – the pro-West Maronite community – at the expenses of the others. In this sense, the census conducted in 1932 became the milestone on which the whole Lebanese political system was based as it paved the way to 'the distribution of the political power according to findings of the census, and [to] the resulting politicisation of the demographic figures' (Maktabi, 1999: 223). As a consequence, the presidency of the republic, the most important post in the executive, was

reserved for the Maronite community that in 1932 still represented the demographic majority.[14] Further confessionalisation of the political system was applied to the chamber of deputies where a ratio of six Christians every five Muslim was in place, and to the other main offices of the executive: the office of Prime Minister reserved for the Sunni Muslims, that of the Speaker of Parliament for the Shi'ite Muslims.[15]

Postmandate Lebanon was, therefore, the result of sectarian differences exacerbated by the mandatory power that made confessional divisions and identity the base for political participation and belonging. Whilst it is beyond the scope of this study to investigate the nature of Lebanese politics and identity that for long and still today render the country so vulnerable to external influences and pressures as well as internal divisions, suffice it to say that this kind of system has led to the fragmentation of the Lebanese body along confessional lines as regards foreign and internal policies and especially as regards the Palestinian cause and the refugees' presence in the country.

These fractures were particularly manifested when the Palestinian refugees arrived in Lebanon in 1948. Except for an initial welcome and sense of hospitality for their Arab brothers, as soon as expectations of temporary displacement were betrayed by Israel's refusal to accept the refugees back, the Lebanese government dramatically changed its attitude. After efforts in coordinating the humanitarian assistance for the refugees through the League of the Red Cross Society especially, and feeling no responsibility towards the refugees and fearing the Palestinians' inevitable naturalisation, the government declared that no further humanitarian assistance would have been offered to the refugees. As, according to the Lebanese government responsibility for the creation of the refugee problem lay with the international community, the United Nations had to take care of the relief until the return of the refugees could be implemented.

While humanitarian assistance soon became the responsibility of the United Nations, and UNRWA in particular, the government was mainly concerned with the security aspect and adopted policies aimed at controlling the refugee presence. Spatial control, as well as a separation of the Palestinians from Lebanese society, could be achieved through the establishment of refugee camps (see Chapter 5). The management of the Palestinians' life was realised through the setting up of special committees attached to

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[14] For a deeper investigation on the ways in which the census took place and was contested see also Chapter 6.

[15] This kind of seat distribution in the chamber of deputies was in place at least until 1989 when the Taïf Agreement putting an end to the Lebanese civil war, among other things, established a new and a more equitable ratio of representation between Muslim and Christian members in the parliament.

the Ministries of Interior and, later on, of Foreign Affairs. The Central Committee for Refugee Affairs was created in 1948 through Decree No. 11567 and while no specific task has been assigned, among other things, this administrative organ had to cooperate with UNRWA in the registrations of the Palestinian refugees and for the consideration of their opportunities of employment in the private sector in the regions of the Bekaa Valley, South Lebanon and Akkar (Al-Natour, 1997; Said, 2001; Sfeir, 2008; Suleiman, 2006).[16] Whilst this was the first move of the Lebanese government to address the presence of the Palestinian refugees in Lebanon, since their arrival the refugees have been living in a legal limbo as no legal definition has ever been issued that could clarify their position, rights or duties in the country. As all forms of legal protection were withdrawn from them, it became easy to exploit the refugee community especially from the labour point of view. In the early 1950s, the Minister of Labour Affairs assured the Lebanese that priority of employment would have always been given to Lebanese nationals (Sfeir, 2008: 125-127). The exploitation of the Palestinian labour force became the norm as, in order to find a job and be able to sustain their families, many Palestinians were ready to accept salaries that could be even half the amount of money received by a Lebanese for the same job.[17]

In the 1960s the Palestinians' position seemed to be, at least partially, framed by the law of July 1962 regulating the entry, exit and residency of non-Lebanese, which indirectly included the Palestinians in the category of foreigners. Certainly, the period that between the end of the 1950s and the end of the 1960s was not one that Palestinians like to remember. In 1959, legislative decrees No. 42 and No. 927 established the Department of Palestine Refugees Affairs in Lebanon attached to the Ministry of Interior and according to these the duties were as follows: to coordinate the relief and provision of various services such as health care and education to the Palestinian refugees; to coordinate with the office of the General Security on matters regarding the issue of IDs and passports (laissez-passer); to register any document relating to the personal status of the refugee (i.e. marriages, births, deaths, change of residency and sect among others); to deal with issues of family reunifications; to deal with any problems arising from the lease or the ownership of the lands on which refugee camps had been established; to consider requests for the transfer of residency from one camp to another or transfer the said residency without any

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[16] While according to some this committee was created in 1950 (i.e. Al-Natour, 1997; Said, 2001), Suleiman (2006: 11-12) and Sfeir (2008: 85) affirm that this committee was instead established in 1948. According to Suleiman the decree No. 11657 was issued on April 4, 1948 with a publication in the official Gazette in May 5, 1948.

[17] Insights from unrecordered conversations with some refugees in Shatila camp during fieldwork.

requests from the refugees if security concerns required so. While this along with others was one of the first pieces of legislation addressing the refugees' right of residency in the country, as well as management of their life through registrations that would have granted them the freedom of movement through the obtainment of laissez-passer and IDs, security concerns in the period had the upper hand. The creation of this agency was, in fact, followed by the establishment of a new committee through Decree No. 2867 approved on December 16, 1959 and by Decree No. 3909 approved one year later. The new body attached to Ministry of Foreign Affairs was the Higher Authority of Palestinian Affairs. While the first decree declared that the General Director of the Department of Palestine Refugees Affairs had to liaise with various offices of different provinces of the country on matters of security, the latter included cooperation with different ministries in the Lebanese government (i.e. National Defence including intelligence services offices, Interior, National Economy and Tourism including the Israel Boycott office; Foreign Affairs including the Palestine Division) in order to gather any information regarding political, military, economic aspects of the Palestinian cause and to monitor any development that might have constituted a security threat for Lebanon. Fundamental in this period was the monitoring of refugees' social and political activities. The establishment of 'observers' in the camps, transfers of certain refugees' residency, close monitoring of refugees' lives even in their more intimate aspects (approval of marriages for instance) and severe restrictions on the refugees' movement reflected a very delicate period of the Lebanese history (see Al-Natour, 1997; El-Natour, 1993; Martin, 2005; Said, 2001).

Certainly, the precarious sectarian political system in Lebanon further fractured after the independence from France in 1943. Although it would be banal to generalise as each sect did not constitute a homogenous and cohesive bloc, but presented nuances and differences in opinions as regards various questions including the Palestinian presence in the country, it is important to mention that the latent issues of identity or Lebanon's position as regards the West, the Middle East and the Arab world were still constituting serious ideological differences. Despite the National Pact in 1943 – an unwritten accord between all the different sects that Lebanon's identity would have been Arab in culture, but as a state it would have developed policies independent from the rest of the Arab world – the demographic balances in the countries were about to change due to the high birth rate among the Muslim sects, the low birth rate among the Christian communities and the high rate of emigration among the latter. Since much power was in the hands of the Maronite community, Muslims and other sects were less politically represented and marginalised.

Decentering the state: The global scope of sovereign power

Feeling second class citizens, these sects began pushing for a new census that would have changed the political *status quo*, also threatened by the rise of pan-Arabism.

Particularly influential in the rise of pan-Arab sentiments spreading also in Lebanon was the Egyptian president, Gen. Gamal Abdel Nasser, who became the symbol of anti-imperialist battles (i.e. see the nationalisation of the Suez Canal in 1956 and the following clash with the British, French and Israeli armies), the hero that would have united the Arab world after having liberated Palestine from the Zionist occupation and freed the Palestinian people from oppression and injustice. While the Palestinian cause had been used as a decoy for ever increasing influences in the region, Egypt and Nasser became increasingly identified as the centre of Arab politics, identity and nationalism, able to appeal to oppressed people's frustrated sentiments hoping for freedom and equality. The road towards Arab unity seemed paved once Egypt and Syria united in 1958 through the creation of the United Arab Republic (hereafter UAR).

The effects of these developments were strongly felt in Lebanon too. Problems of political representations and significant economic inequalities (see also Chapter 6) melded with a foreign policy that seemed to be withdrawing any support for the Arab cause. This was because during the Suez crisis (1956) the then Lebanese president Camille Chamoun (1952-1958) did not break diplomatic relations with France and Britain involved in the conflict. As a consequence, Muslim sects and others felt increasingly alienated. Following the proclamation of the UAR, general strikes, mass demonstrations and upheavals broke out in Lebanon in March 1958 calling, among other things, for the union with the UAR. Fearing the overthrow of the political *status quo*, Chamoun called for the US intervention within the framework of the Eisenhower doctrine. Peace could be restored through the election of the new president, Gen. Fouad Chehab (1958-1964), who appealed to Lebanese unity, declared the equality of Muslim and Christian citizens and adopted more neutral foreign policies (Farsoun and Wingerter, 1981/1982; Peretz, 1994; Traboulsi, 2007). While this kept the Arab nationalists silent for a while, the high presence of Palestinian refugees in the country could still represent a thorny challenge for the unquestioned Christian supremacy in the political arena. A harsh repression of the Palestinian community was exercised during the period of the so-called Deuxième Bureau (1959-1969) named after the Lebanese intelligence services. Surveillance was applied in the camps and repression of any social and political activity was harsh. This not only prevented the Palestinians from establishing any political organisation or party, but refugees were in the hands of bureaucrats and intelligence officers who disposed of their life with threats, arbitrary

beatings and detention, forced transfers of residency from one camp to another, all under the umbrella of 'security reasons' (see also Chapter 5). Any aspect of the refugees' lives was strictly monitored to prevent the establishment of dangerous alliances between the Palestinians and the unsatisfied layers of Lebanese society. As Chehab affirmed, these kinds of repressive measures towards the Palestinian refugees were justified on the basis of:

> Let's speak frankly. Lebanon is a country of sects; and we treat everyone according to this reality. If we treat you [Palestinians] as a sect, you will dominate the others because of your large numbers, your concentration in the same places, and your passion for politics. The Lebanese state is unable to deal with these problems and thus we have to replace social measures with security measures. In other words, the Palestinian problem is bigger than Lebanon. For Lebanon will either repress the Palestinians or be repressed by them – and no third solution exists (Chehab cited in Brynen, 1990: 29).

In the camps police and intelligence officers exercised a pure administration of life where they could decide on the life or death of the refugees. Those suspected of taking part in any political movement or activity were cast out of the normal order or tortured arbitrarily.

This discretionary power was not only exercised in the camps. It was also a mobile power that affected all the Palestinians living in the camps as well as outside the camp. While the refugees were subjected to arbitrary treatment and decisions over their hypothetically secret and subversive activities in the camps, 'legal' discriminations through decrees and administrative orders captured the life of Palestinians living outside the camps. The issue of two decrees concerning the entry, exit, residency and work of foreigners in Lebanon equalised the refugees to any foreigner wishing to live and work in the country. In particular, Decree No. 17561 issued on September 1964 regulated the work of foreigners on Lebanese soil and sanctioned that all foreigners had to obtain a work permit. Whilst Palestinian refugees are not directly mentioned, they were included within these provisions

as the law regulating the entry, exit and residency of foreigners issued on July 1962 defined as foreigners any person not holding the Lebanese nationality. Trapped between legal discriminations and arbitrary repression typical of the period of the Deuxième Bureau, the Palestinians found it very difficult to obtain permits as many professions were excluded to them because the reciprocity principle was applied. Not only were qualified professions such as medicine, law and engineering forbidden to them, even though they had the qualifications to work in those sectors, but also, in the unlikelihood of them obtaining a work permit, the principle of reciprocity precluded them from receiving the same treatment reserved for Lebanese or other foreigners. Not being citizens of a state that could guarantee the same treatment to Lebanese nationals, even if the refugees managed to legalise their jobs, they would have paid taxes for the social security scheme but could not benefit from it (Al-Natour, 1997; El-Natour, 1993; Said, 2001; Suleiman, 2006).

Exploited in the industrial, construction and agricultural sectors, the Palestinians in Lebanon were excluded from the enjoyment of basic human rights. Their life became expendable and disposable as no protection was accorded to them. No protection from the international community that provided the mere humanitarian assistance without intervening in their political rights as individuals or collectivity; no protection from the Lebanese state that treated them as a security threat to be closely monitored and hit arbitrarily; and not from a Palestinian national movement that still in formation was unable to represent the rights of their people or would-be citizens. Ever dependent on the humanitarian relief, discriminated against because of their refugee condition and impossibility to return to their homes and villages by then part of Israel, the Palestinians have paid the price of the Lebanese ruling classes too afraid of granting them any rights as well as of regional events that impacted on their life.

This marginalisation continued until 1969 when, thanks to the rise of the Palestinian Resistance Movement (hereafter PRM) and the ever increasing clashes between the feda'yeen (Palestinian combatants) and the Lebanese army, the Lebanese government was forced to sign the Cairo Agreement.[18] Not only did this accord give the Palestinian resistance the right to train and attempt to liberate their homeland by launching operations from the Lebanese soil, but, most importantly, the agreement gave them the right to self

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[18] According to Cobban (1984: 45) and Cooley (1979: 30), the Cairo Agreement, signed by the Lebanese government and the PLO, were announced as secret and official notes. Although they have never been officially divulgated, some unofficial publications appeared in the Lebanese newspapers and have never been contested by the Lebanese government (see for instance the text in Arabic published by Al-Diyar newspaper on 12 June 1991). The text has then been reproduced in other publications. Amongst others, see Chamoun, 1977: 171-174 and Shiblak, 1998: 25-26.

administer their spaces and the right to work. While, as we shall see in the next chapter, the rise of the Palestinian movement in Lebanon freed the refugees from the grip of the Lebanese authorities within and beyond the camps and implanted in them a new sense of empowerment, the involvement of the Palestinian factions in the Lebanese civil war precipitated their condition (see Serious clashes over the Palestinians in Lebanon, 1975). The presence of the Palestinian resistance in the country and their cross-border activities led the Israeli army to carry out retaliatory attacks, at times disproportionate, and to deliberately hit both Palestinian and Lebanese civilian areas in the hope of inducing the Lebanese government and army to expel and crush the Palestinian armed resistance. The Palestinian resistance and civilian presence was again dividing the country and whilst much blame was attributed to the Palestinians for the start of the Lebanese conflict, there were other motivations including the growing economic inequality spreading in the country and in particular among certain sects (see Chapter 6). Yet, much of the blame for the outbreak of the civil war as well as two heavy Israeli invasions and multiple attacks was placed on the Palestinians. Physical violence towards the refugees, combatants as well as civilians, took the upper hand as Lebanese militias as well as the Israeli army that invaded the country twice (1978 and 1982), assaulted the camps and the civilian population in their attempts to erase the Palestinian military and political presence and decrease the civil presence in the country (Schiff and Ya'ari, 1984).[19]

The second Israeli invasion in 1982, 'Operation Peace for Galilee', in particular, had disastrous effects on the Palestinian refugees. With the aim of destroying the PLO's military and political capacity and, in agreement with would-be Lebanese President Bachir Gemayel to hopefully reduce the number of the Palestinian civilians residing in Lebanon, the Israeli army heavily bombarded and attacked densely populated areas and PLO headquarters in Beirut (Fisk, 2001; Janse, 1982; Schiff and Ya'ari, 1984). The brutality of the Israeli invasions and attacks was not limited to the arbitrariness and violence which did not distinguish between civilian and military targets. Despite the use of unconventional and prohibited weapons on civilians – like phosphorus bombs – the Israeli army by any means seriously obstructed and delayed relief operations carried out by UNRWA, the Red Cross and the Palestinian Red Crescent by arresting medical and humanitarian staff (Fisk, 2001). It was as if the Palestinian life already depoliticised through the withdrawal of diplomatic and legal protection, the non-solution of their predicament, and hit with such violence

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[19] For Israeli geopolitical interests in the region see also Norton and Schwedler, 1993.

could not even deserve any longer survival through humanitarian aid (food, medical supplies, shelters or hospitalisation).

Diplomatic pressures of the Lebanese as well as US envoy in charge of the mediation with the PLO to officially leave Lebanon or to face the destruction of the whole Beirut led the Palestinian leadership to agree on withdrawal. After obtaining assurance from the US envoy that the civilians would be protected by a multinational force, the PLO left Lebanon from the main ports at the end of August 1982. However, the PLO and the Palestinian fighters' withdrawal had major consequences for the Palestinian refugees. Notoriously famous was the three-day massacre of 'Sabra and Shatila' started on September 16, 1982 and carried out by the Lebanese Forces militias with the tacit consent of the Israeli army in control of West Beirut once the multinational force withdrew and just few days after the PLO's departure (among others Al-Hout, 2004).

In the wider context of the civil war in which hundreds of thousands of Lebanese civilians also lost their lives, one must remember that the Palestinians in Lebanon were subjected to a process of double dehumanisation and exclusion. First, they were depicted as the cause of the Lebanese internal divisions and as 'terrorists' by the Israelis (see also Said, 1991); and secondly, they were slaughtered and killed with impunity as no measures have been taken against the perpetrators of the massacre. As I discuss below (Chapter 5), the approval of the Amnesty Law in 1991 washed away all the crimes committed during the civil war as if never happened. But the Sabra and Shatila massacre was not the only violent event the refugees endured during the Lebanese civil war. Also mentioning of the 'War of the Camps' (1985-1987) revives heavy and painful memories as refugee camps became the target of Lebanese militia Amal's attacks. Result of a desire to free the nation from the 'Palestinian plague', the 'War of the Camps' was also the consequence of broader geopolitical interests that saw the indirect involvement of Syria in the siege of the camps to erase any pro-PLO faction.

To question the responsibility and accountability for their conditions and the production of their bare life in the truest Agambenian sense of killable with impunity, one must certainly take into consideration actors beyond the Lebanese army or government and embrace an analysis that could contextualise their being trapped between the pursuit of their cause and external f/actors. It is worth noting that Lebanon and the Palestinian life became battlegrounds of broader geopolitical, regional as well as international interests that affected the refugees directly and indirectly. Commenting on Lebanon's role in the Middle East, El-Khazen (1997: 276) suggests that 'Lebanon was [and perhaps still is] a

passive actor in regional power politics, in inter-Arab rivalries as well as in Arab-Israeli politics'. It was not only influenced by regional events that had a tremendous impact on Lebanese internal affairs, but also wider struggles have been fought on its territory and the Palestinian refugee camps. As Cold War winds blew across the Middle East, different armies and states' interests conflated there and as Farsoun and Zacharia (1997: 164) argue:

> Lebanon became the battleground of domestic, regional, and international (superpower) proxy wars. Practically every Arab state or political movement, Israel, Iran, many European states, the United States, and the Soviet Union intervened in Lebanon diplomatically, politically, militarily, financially, and through in-kind grants and many other services (training, intelligence, etc.). More bewildering, such interventions often favoured one subfaction or another of the opposing coalitions (right-wing Christians vs. the LNM [Lebanese National Movement] and PRM/PLO) and complicated enormously the course of conflict and the prospects of resolution of the civil war.

If it is true that among the Arab countries that host the refugees, the Palestinians found in Lebanon the harshest conditions and treatment because of its particular and delicate balances, it is also true that their life was not only dependent on the Lebanese government's or authorities' decisions. A significant part of their predicament and also violence to which they have been subjected was the consequence of broader geopolitical influences, all conflating in Lebanon and the Palestinian refugee camps. As the sovereign is the one that decides on the life by drawing the line between those deserving to live and to die, it cannot be localised at the level of Lebanese government only. Rather a complex network of diverse sovereign powers, which included the Lebanese militias as well as foreign armies intervening in Lebanon during the civil war, was circulating and had tragic effects on the life of the refugees.

Regional and international influences: Refugees in the post-conflict era

During the civil war the Palestinian refugees have been particularly instrumentalised revealing their being disposable, but the end of the Lebanese conflict through the signature of the Taïf Agreement in 1989 did not represent a watershed and a radical change of their condition.[20] If the period of the civil war was marked by unprecedented violence as they were subjected to assaults, siege and massacres, the post-conflict era signalled the return of legal measures aimed at alienating them and forcing them to leave the country. Whilst one of the main reasons for this renewed discrimination lay with the fear of *tawtin* – implantation and naturalisation of the Palestinians – and with the sectarian political system that despite the promises contained in the Taïf accords has yet to be 'deconfessionalised' (see text of the Taïf Agreements in Menassa, 1995), the precariousness of the refugees' condition in Lebanon is also the outcome of the launch of the Madrid Peace conference in 1991 and the collapse of a bipolar system that for long granted the Palestinian full, though conditional, support from the Soviet Union.

In addition to these two great changes in the world political scenario – the end of the Cold War and the beginning of the Peace Process – a multiplicity of factors have greatly affected the Palestinian refugees' life in Lebanon. The withdrawal of the PLO from Lebanon in 1982 left them with no political representation and no one that could actually engage in a diplomatic defence of their basic human rights. As the Palestinians were excluded from the reconciliation talks taking place in the aftermath of the civil war, diplomatic representation of the Palestinians' interests was too fragmented as the Palestinian movement split in pro-PLO and against-PLO factions (among others Salah, 2000). Also the great infrastructure and services established by the PLO in the 1970s[21] were all destroyed during the war and the Palestinians that at least until 1982 could work and enjoy services provided by the Palestinian institutions were left unemployed and without social care. Restrictions on the right to work in particular became particularly deleterious. The unilateral abrogation of the Cairo Agreement in 1987, that for long has granted them the right to work with no need of work permit, along with new restrictions on their right to work approved in 1983 were aimed at protecting the Lebanese labour from

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[20] While the Taïf Agreements (1989) officially called for an end of the civil conflict, effectively clashes stopped in 1990 when Gen. Aoun, self-declared Christian Prime Minister contravening the rule according to which the office is reserved for the Sunni Muslim sect, definitely surrendered and found refuge within the French Embassy (Peretz, 1994: 398-399).

[21] On the PLO infrastructures and services, see Chapter 4.

the potential competitiveness of the refugees and made the unemployment rate of the refugee community rise dramatically (Knudsen, 2009: 2).

While for a long time the Gulf states have represented a good alternative to the very limited job opportunities in Lebanon ever since the 1960s, after the Gulf war some 40,000 to 50,000 'Lebanese' Palestinians working in the region were either expelled or forced to leave because of the PLO's support of Iraq's invasion of Kuwait (1990-1991). This arose because Saddam Hussein promoted himself as the new anti-imperial fighter ready to protect the Palestinian cause (U.S. Committee for Refugees, 1999: 17). Since then job opportunities in the Gulf states have been severely curtailed to them as well as the chance to send remittances to their families in Lebanon to help them deal with the difficult economic situation. Furthermore, as a consequence of the PLO's support for Saddam Hussein, in the 1990s many states, such as Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, and other Persian Gulf countries that had previously supported the PLO cut their funding. This reduced the PLO's ability to pay the pensions to the families of the 'martyrs', vital for those who lost a male family member that could have sustained the family economically (Takkenberg, 1998; U.S. Committee for Refugees, 1999).

As the Gulf states were forbidden for the Palestinian labour force and as new restrictions on the right to work in Lebanon were applied, Libya in the 1990s came to represent the chance to improve their economic condition and that of their families in Lebanon. However, this opportunity did not last for long as, following the UN Security Council's economic block on the country in response to Ghedaffi's refusal to extradite two men accused of carrying out terrorist acts, Libya decided to limit foreign workers' presence and in 1995 expelled all the Palestinians in protest towards a peace initiative that still did not show any result. The reaction of the Lebanese government to the possibility of having about 5,000 refugees back was rather swift as new travel restrictions were approved by the Ministry of the Interior in the same year. Decree No. 478 regulated the entry and exit of the Palestinians. According to the decree, each Palestinian abroad had to apply for an entry visa through Lebanese embassies or consulates and these provisions left many stranded in airports and ports, and in a legal limbo: rejected by the Libyan authorities and denied return to Lebanon (Doraï, 2006: 177; Knudsen, 2009). These regulations were in place until 1999 Prime Minister Selim Hoss revoked the decree.

As regards the right to work, the departure of the Syrian troops from Lebanon in 2005 marked a minor change as the Ministry of Labour signed a memorandum that formally allowed the Palestinians to be employed in manual and clerical jobs. This lifted

the ban on about fifty professions though the ban on qualified professions is still in place. Although this was perceived as a great step towards the implementation of their right to work, still the memorandum did not lift the requirement of the work permit nor guaranteed that a social security scheme would be applied to the Palestinians through the cancellation of the reciprocity principle for their case (Natour, 2005). As Amnesty International (2007) points out, the problem with this limited concession is that it has yet to be passed into law and, therefore, can still be amended at any time depending on the economic conditions of the country or the moods of the government.

According to Shiblak (1996: 39), this is another instance of the executive taking the upper hand and confirms that the management of life through ministerial decrees and administrative orders not only allows for different interpretations, but also allows for the perpetration of endless abuses of power according to changing political conditions. As Knudsen (2009) argues, not only does the issue of these administrative orders and decrees reveal an erosion of the legislative power in favour of the executive, but this kind of management of material life also shows no attention to the juridical value of life itself. This also demonstrates how 'the legal process was [and still is] throughout subservient to the host countries' and governments' foreign and domestic agendas and, in Lebanon especially, placed the judiciary and the legislature under executive patronage' (ibid; see also Agamben, 2005a).

This demonstrates how the war waged against the Palestinians during the civil war is fought in the post-conflict era through legal procedures and legal discriminations. Reversing Clausewitz's proposition, Foucault (2003) questioned whether politics is the continuation of war by other means. In so doing, he also engaged in a reflection of law itself:

> The organisation and juridical structure of power, of States, monarchies, and societies, does not emerge when the clash of arms ceases. [...] The law is not born of nature [...]: the law is born of real battles, victories, massacres, and conquests which can be dated and which have their horrific heroes; the law was born in burning towns and ravaged fields (p. 50).

Law does not mark 'normal' times as opposite to 'exceptional' times as 'beneath the law, war continues to rage in all the mechanism of power, even in the most regular' (p. 50). In this way critiquing Agamben's (2005a) reflections, executive power exceeding their roles through the issues of decrees having 'force of law' may be read in a different way. Rather than being the evidence that the exception has become the rule, it shows how life is today managed through an excess of legal measures (Johns, 2005; Neocleous, 2006).

Certainly these decisions are not only outcome of the Lebanese fragile system, but taken on the ground of wider contexts and events. As mentioned above a comprehensive peace process for the Middle East, especially in the aftermath of the Gulf War, began in Madrid in 1991 under the auspices of the American administration and with the aim of also solving the Palestine question. As regards the latter, the peace initiative contemplated a series of multilateral and bilateral talks. Whilst the former saw the participation of Israel and Arab countries for the solution of pending questions in the Middle East region – such as the problem of water resources sharing – the latter provided a framework for discussions to be held between Israel and each Arab country and the Palestinian representatives. The Madrid peace process never produced any tangible results, but parallel and secret talks between Israeli and PLO representatives in Norway led to the signature of the Oslo Accords in 1993. This led to the mutual recognition of the PLO and the state of Israel and plans were made to establish the Palestinian Authority that would have achieved gradual autonomy in the Occupied Territories starting from areas of the West Bank. While these plans were aimed at the creation of a Palestinian state and although the Road Map that should have led to the gradual independence was itself disputable as no territorial continuity was granted to the Palestinians for the administration of their areas, the refugee issue has always been postponed. At the time of writing no significant step forward towards the solution to the displacement of the millions of refugees has yet been undertaken, leaving the Palestinians in a legal limbo.[22]

Yet, if the peace process has already proved inconclusive, the disclosure of alleged negotiation documents involving the Bush administration, Israel and the Palestinian

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[22] As of September 2011, the last developments involved a potential recognition of the Palestinian state on the Occupied Territories. The Palestinian bid for statehood at the United Nations is expected shortly. Whilst one could argue that the establishment of the Palestinian state would guarantee citizenship rights to the Palestinians, the situation of the Palestinians refugees of the *diaspora* remains unclear. The worst, and to some most likely, scenario would see a Palestinian state neglect the refugees' right of return. The birth of a Palestinian state might also lead to the dissolution of the PLO that, in this way, could no longer represent the rights of all the Palestinians no matter where they live (amongst others see the newspapers and online articles section El Laz, 2011; Sherwood, 2011).

Authority casts a dark shadow on the fate of millions of Palestinians of the *diaspora*. According to the 'Palestinian leaks' released in January 2011 and following only by some months the publications by Wikileaks of secret files and cables concerning the war on Iraq, the Palestinian Authority would have approved massive concessions that would have favoured Israel including the annexation to Israel of most of East Jerusalem – a sacred city for both the Jews and Muslims and city that both the Palestinians and the Israelis see as their future capital. Most importantly, what these alleged negotiation files reveal is the definitive abandonment of the diasporic Palestinians because the right of return sanctioned in many UN Resolutions has been totally neglected in favour of a symbolic return of just a very few thousands refugees – about 10,000.[23]

Lebanon's policies towards the refugees must, therefore, be understood within a broader framework. It is worth noting that if Israel will not accept the return of the Palestinians within its boundaries, this will constitute a major political problem for Lebanon. According to 1992 UNRWA figures, only 1% of the 'Lebanese' Palestinian refugees come from the West Bank and Gaza and the rest might not have an interest in settling in a Palestinian state as they do not have any connections or memories linked to those lands (Brynen, 1997: 48-49). Moreover, not only is their right of return to their villages in present day Israel questioned and doubted, but also their hypothetical transfer to a future Palestinian state is still perceived as a 'demographic security' problem for Israel (Pappe, 2001). In this scenario, the Lebanese authorities fear an inevitable naturalisation of its Palestinians that would trigger renewed sectarian divisions and disorders. As this is opposed by the government, the rejection of the naturalisation of the refugees is translated into the discriminatory and embittered legislation towards the Palestinians in the hope that sooner or later the refugees will leave or be settled in other countries (Drake, 2000; El-Khazen, 1997; Salam, 1994; Sayigh R., 1988, 1995a, 1995b, 1998, 2001). Quite revealing was the declaration of Lebanese President Elias Hrawi that the government was ready to expel all the Palestinians residing in the country if the whole peace process failed to adequately address the refugee issue (U.S. Committee for Refugees, 1999: 12; see also Hudson, 1997: 258; Knudsen, 2007: 7).

Beyond the discriminatory decrees and orders concerning the right to work, other legal measures were taken in order to give the international community a strong signal of Lebanon's position and to convince the Palestinian refugees to leave or be ready to face a

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[23] For more information on the Palestinian leaks, see the newspapers and online articles section BBC News, 2011; Carlstrom, 2011; Milne and Black, 2011.

miserable life in Lebanon. As El-Natour (2003) argues, in 2001, an amendment of the real estate law concerning the non-Lebanese's acquisition of properties – law No. 11615 issued on 1969 – was clearly intended to exclude the Palestinians from the right to buy any real estate or even inherit properties. As the amendment sanctions that any person that is not a citizen of a recognised state cannot acquire any real-estate property in Lebanon, it is obvious that the modification was approved to address the Palestinian refugees because they still do not hold any citizenship and a Palestinian state still does not exist. This led many that for years managed to live outside the camps to either face illegality or to return to the camps where reconstruction or new constructions are severely restricted, and where overcrowding increases exponentially as camp's boundaries cannot be expanded. The right to acquire property for the Palestinians was perceived as the road to naturalisation and to justify this position Sami Gemayel, MP of the Phalange Party, in an interview aired on LBC TV in March 2010 declared that 'allowing Palestinian refugees the right to own a home risks keeping them in Lebanon rather than helping their return home'. He further argued that granting them rights in Lebanon is nothing but 'an Israel and US plot to prevent their return to their homeland'.[24] It is in fact widely perceived that granting the Palestinians any basic right in Lebanon would stand for an acceptance of their naturalisation and denial of their right of return.

Discrimination in Lebanon seems to constitute the norm, but the bareness of the refugees' condition is also dramatised by a general political and gradual humanitarian abandonment. As the withdrawal of the PLO from Lebanon in 1982 marked an already negative change in terms of diplomatic representation of the refugees in the Lebanese context, their abandonment was further revealed after the signature of the Oslo Accords in 1993 as the Palestinian Authority began focusing on the West Bank and Gaza where a Palestinian state might be born one day. Yet, despite the reopening of a PLO office in Beirut in 2006 after Syria's withdrawal in 2005 and the re-establishment of a dialogue with the Lebanese government, the talks with the Lebanese have yet to show concrete results in the improvement of the refugees' conditions that appear to be among the most desperate in the Middle East, at times even equalising Gaza figures on matters regarding health care, camp populations and conditions of the camps among others (see Brynen, 2009).

The political abandonment was in fact followed by a gradual humanitarian abandonment as the relief and assistance provided by the international community through

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[24] See the newspapers and online articles section Lamb, 2010.

UNRWA was reduced. After Oslo, in particular, donations have decreased as the donors felt that a solution to the Palestinian cause would have soon been found. Moreover, since Oslo much of the limited funds have been used to support development projects in the territories that should one day be part of the Palestinian state and, as a consequence, Palestinian refugees in Lebanon have seen their UNRWA budget considerably reduced. Yet, while in other countries they are allowed to access public services such as schools and health care, in Lebanon they can only rely on UNRWA support because they are prevented from using public services. However, UNRWA's support is insufficient. As regards health care, for instance, because of serious budgetary problems, UNRWA can only partially cover a hypothetical hospitalisation, forcing refugees to rely on other sources or to ask the help of relatives and friends to be able to get a necessary surgery.[25] Moreover, biopolitical considerations of whom should be supported and helped materialise as 'this kind of limited support is offered only to Palestinian refugees below the age of 59 years rais[ing] serious questions about the ethics of UNRWA aid' (Othman, 1998). The biopolitics of aid is rendered so explicit as if the oldest are no longer worthy of saving or curing. The politics of life and death is, therefore, manifested in the decision to let the elderly die and concentrate the limited resources on younger people. This shows the transformation of the 'politics of keeping alive' – typical of humanitarian intervention, biopower – into a politics of 'letting die' (Agier, 2011: 211). Beyond a legal and diplomatic abandonment already so explicit, as funds are increasingly reduced and humanitarian relief gradually stops, we are perhaps witnessing the total abandonment of the Palestinian cause as refugees are left to themselves to fight as much as they can their legal, political, economic and social exclusions.

Concluding remarks

The inability to find a solution to the Palestine and refugee question had disastrous consequences for the refugees. Displaced and left with no means of livelihood, the Palestinians were also left stateless and without the diplomatic protection that a state would guarantee to its citizens. Victims of a double exclusion, the refugees have also been excluded from the legal protection that bodies such as the UNHCR could have guaranteed. The Agambenian inclusive exclusion materialised only after the second exception – from

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[25] According to Othman (1998), an open heart surgery costs up to $15,000 of which UNRWA covers only $2,700. According to the U.S. Committee for Refugees (1999), instead, costs of these kinds of surgery vary between $7,000 and $12,000 with UNRWA being able to pay no more than $1,500.

the mandate of UNHCR – as the Palestinians are entrusted to UNRWA and humanitarian organisations whose main task is to keep them alive. Humanitarianism can, therefore, be seen not as the response to sovereign power's exclusion, but as sovereign power's 'left hand'. As biopower becomes the supplement of sovereign power, humanitarian organisations capture the life of the refugees rendered bare by the sovereign's decision. With the aim of making the refugees survive, humanitarian organisations, as much as the sovereign does, deny the political and juridical significance of the refugee's life by drawing lines on whom to cure and whom to let die.

The chapter also demonstrated the impossibility of identifing sovereign power with the state only. The decision on the Palestinian life is not a prerogative that the Lebanese government holds exclusively. Decisions taken at different scales – international and regional– affect the Palestinians as much as the Lebanese government's measures. While it may seem that sovereignty has migrated from the nation-state to the global level moving on biopolitical and exceptional terrains (Cladwell, 2004; Hardt and Negri, 2001), power must still be seen as a relation in which different actors decide and act in a concert of actions and responses that depend on circumstances and interests. As if occurring on a horizontal plan, power moves and circulates through the Lebanese state, suprastate institutions (UN and UNRWA), the international community and the neighbouring states. For an international community that attempts to impose the naturalisation of the refugees, there is a state that, though arguably, resists the refugees' implantation through the management of their life and the discrimination.

State-centric perspectives are not useful to understand the ways in which power operates. Nor are the global biopolitical views that would rather see a global sovereignty where nation-state have no authority or prerogative of decision as the right key to investigate the production of bare life. Precisely because power is a relation and not an all-encompassing one-direction relation where the oppressed is fated to remain such, multiple sovereign decisions can be resisted, challenged and contested. While freedom, Foucault sustained, is an essential precondition, the next chapter explores crucial moments in which sovereign power reveals leakages and weaknesses and the loss of control of its population.

4- Decentering the state and empowering people: Resistance between civil society and military struggles

> *For if we had indeed acquired that 'hate and bitterness' that the Western world claimed we were reputed for, we also danced the dabke, played the oud, and the women worked their embroidery. And those people outside the camp (not to mention the Western 'tourists' with their blessed sympathy, their cameras, their sociology degrees, and their methodological and statistical charts), seeing our tattered rags hanging on us like white flags of surrender, but not hearing our 'ya leil, ya aein', [my night, my mind] did not know what we had. A feeling within us. Growing. A hope. A hope.*
>
> *(Turki, 1972: 46)*

If the Palestinian refugees have been depoliticised through a legal abandonment and the humanitarian management of their life, certainly the sovereign exception does not correspond to the withdrawal of their political value and chances of resistance. Multiscalar sovereign power forces have since the Nakba been affecting the refugees' lives. As decisions were taken to directly or indirectly withdraw any form of legal and diplomatic protection, the 'left hand of the Empire' intervened by taking care of them and their survival. As their bare life was put at the centre of the sovereign power's and biopower's concerns, the Palestinian refugees have often been represented as speechless, helpless and at the mercy of different security, governmental and humanitarian apparatuses. But is this a comprehensive picture of their experience in Lebanon?

Passive recipients of humanitarian aid and at the mercy of the Lebanese authorities as well as different states' interests and decisions, the Palestinians have often been depicted

as victims. Whilst this description is true since decisions taken by different 'sovereigns' have deeply affected their lives, the account of their displacement is somewhat incomplete and inaccurate. Although Agamben's understanding of sovereign power and his theory of exception may shed some light on the condition of the Palestinian refugees in Lebanon especially as regards their life in the camps (discussed in the next chapter), it seems that the application of his reflections could not entirely grasp the actual condition of the Palestinians in the country. This is not only because a more complex network of sovereign powers impact upon their life (as seen in the previous sections), but also because sovereign power as described by Agamben does not leave any space for resistance or power relations to take place. Palestinian refugees in Lebanon have always been treated as objects of intervention by both the humanitarian agencies and the Lebanese authorities. Yet, the impression that the Palestinians remain objects of intervention and exclusion, incapable of any agency is much indebted to a literature and an international legal system that equate political subjectivity or agency with citizenship only. The assumption that political subjectivity is 'possessed' or 'enacted' only by those officially entitled to political rights – citizens of a state – is in fact misleading and would not render a more complex picture of the Palestinians' experience in Lebanon.

If we instead abandon an idea of power understood only in terms of law and rights and embrace a Foucauldian understanding of power as productive, dispersed and circulating, we might be able to reveal a different perspective of the refugees' subjectivity and life. As discussed in the first chapter, unless caught in the net of a power that tortures or kills systematically, there is always the chance of resistance and dissent. Power is a process and a relation through which struggles and confrontations take place. Although power could be identified with the state, this localisation is rather limiting as what is at stake for Foucault is not the 'political power' but human relations (Foucault, 1997: 283). It is 'everywhere, not because it embraces everything, but because it comes from everywhere' (Elden in Coleman and Grove, 2009: 499). Power is a continuity with multiple centres and is not only negative and limiting, but can be positive and productive. Most of all, it is not pyramidal (Deleuze, 1988: 27). It does not move on vertical hierarchical lines, but relations of power occur on the same surface. This means that even if refugees are excluded from citizenship and protection, they may still act politically resisting forces that want their life disposable. Practices of resistance and coping strategies are in fact constantly developed through the refugees' most ordinary and everyday practices (see also Isin and Rygiel, 2007; Malkki, 1996; Rajaram, 2002).

Decentering the state and empowering people

The firm rejection of the discourse that depicts the refugees as passive objects of intervention and exclusion is necessary to uncover other aspects of the refugee experience. In order to reject universalistic generalisations of their suffering, a 'genealogical approach' is essential to recognise 'the contingency, multiplicity, and complexity of refugee events and experiences' not only for the causes of their displacement but also in relation to its aftermath (Soguk, 1999: 8). This requires one to look closely at the ways in which the Palestinians themselves develop strategies of survival and resistance. While overestimating their possibilities would be disrespectful of their predicament and condition, in this chapter I frame the Palestinian 'resistance' focusing on their extraordinary reaction, activism and problem-solving.

In this chapter, the dispersal of power is investigated in both the refugees' coping strategies as well as Lebanese society's fundamental role in contributing to the Palestinians' emancipation or further exclusion. In so doing, I rely on different secondary and primary sources to provide evidence of the ways in which Palestinian resistance could be framed. While primary sources such as interviews have been both collected and analysed by myself, some secondary sources provided precious insights on other ways in which the Palestinians have challenged sovereign decisions in different context. Secondary materials have been re-interpreted in light of a reflection on power relations.

In the first section of the chapter, the Palestinians' determination is explored. By focusing on their refusal of a life made of eating, sleeping, obeying and hoping, it is shown how the refugees react to their displacement and condition of deprivation by re-establishing their dignity and re-constructing their shattered and divided society. As forms of controls are turned into strategies of survival, refugees reconfigure power relations through their hope and actions.

Although the refugees' activism was essential for their emancipation, the following part investigates the impact of Lebanese public opinion in their life and explores the nature of the Lebanese-Palestinian relations from the initial solidarity to the breakup of their bonds. From the sharing of pan-Arab sentiments to the sharing of an economic, social and political marginalisation, the alliance between the Lebanese and the Palestinians became essential for the ascendancy of the PLO and the Palestinian Resistance Movement (PRM) in Lebanon. Yet, the breakup of these relations during the Lebanese civil war (1975-1990) meant for the Palestinians the loss of their emancipation and strength as in the 1980s former allies attacked the refugee camps.

Decentering the state and empowering people

The last part of the chapter discusses the aftermath of the civil war. As much as the Lebanese had a positive role in the emergence of a more confident and self-reliant Palestinian community, they also deeply and negatively affected the Palestinians' life later on. As Lebanese public opinion seems to matter as much as regional and international decisions, it is shown how society may play an important role in the way in which the host government might treat the refugees. As the Lebanese government and society agree on the marginalisation of the Palestinians to prevent their naturalisation, discriminatory laws and orders are passed undisturbed as no, or very timid, opposition arises.

The chapter concludes with a section in which I reflect on the meaning of Palestinian resistance today. Despite multifaceted exclusions and oppressions, the Palestinians demonstrate their ability to resist. By acting on their very zones of exclusions, bypassing legal impediments and transgressing the law, their individual agencies practice the rights they claim. Challenging law and state's decisions, the multiplicity of individual and 'incidental resistances' might lead to a change.

Palestinians in the aftermath of the Nakba:
From the reconstitution of Palestinian dignity to the struggle

It is undeniable that for most of the Palestinians that found refuge in Lebanon life has been very hard. Displaced and left with no means of livelihood, the majority of them could rely only on the humanitarian organisations' support or were forced to move to the refugee camps. Though their life for a great part had to revolve around the humanitarian relief, the Palestinians found their own ways of resisting a power, or a multiplicity of powers, that positioned them as passive recipients of aid. Never giving up their hope in a better future and resisting their condition, refugees in Lebanon developed different strategies to improve their situation and to avoid exclusive dependence on the humanitarian agencies or external help.

Among others, the ration that is one of the most evident signs of a biopower penetrating the refugees' body and insinuating a sense of obligation towards those that provide the food, became itself an instrument of resistance for some. Whilst explaining the cultural and gendered logic that surrounded the reception of food according to which only women and children would queue and bear the humiliation of getting the humanitarian relief, Peteet (2005: 78-80) argues that some used to re-sell their rations to purchase other

basic necessities and consumer staples not provided by UNRWA. The re-selling of the rations was common for those families whose numbers were declining or for those who had relatives abroad who could send remittances. This strategy was essential to escape the circle of passive reception of food and aid. On the one hand, it was used to resist a power which imposes quantity, quality and kind of food to be eaten and, on the other, the act of re-selling became an instrument of liberation. As Peteet (2005: 78) suggests in fact, 'by selling rations, refugees gained some measure of control over the domestic economy of food and consumption'. This meant that the ration became a materiality that did not maintain the role for which it was designed – penetrating the refugee's body to make him/her survive and install a sense of obligation. The ration was utilised by recipients in different ways as it entered a system of exchange in which refugees could decide what to sell, what to buy and what to eat. As Foucault (1997: 295) argued, 'one escape[s] from a domination of truth not by playing the game that was totally different from the game of truth but by playing the same game differently, or playing another game, another hand, with other trump cards'. The 'acceptance' of the ration did not stand for a passive reception of aid and, along with it, a passive reception of the humanitarian regime to which the refugees have been confined. The Palestinians accepted the rations, but some of them managed to actively change the purpose of the aid received. A different economy is installed and with it power relations are re-instated too. Through the money earned they could choose what to buy without being forced to eat the products that UNRWA distributed and were able to vary their diet.

However, early forms of resistance emerged also in other contexts. As discussed in the previous chapter, the education that the Palestinian refugees received was a matter of deep contestation because of the adoption of syllabi that did not consider the history of Palestine and the reason of their displacement. The teaching of these kinds of subjects to young Palestinian children would have been too dangerous in that they could have grown up with feelings of resentment and anger. Yet, for a power that wants them to forget about their past, origins, identity and rights, there is a resistance that contrasts and fights the attempted erasure of pages of their history. While the reasons for their displacement and the nature of their culture and traditions were discussed during occasional meetings in the camps or in the cafes, the teaching of the history of their homeland and the Palestinian people became also the prerogative of the families. Asked about the ways in which he managed to 'keep in touch' with his Palestinian origins despite being so young and being born in Lebanon, Seif, a Palestinian living in Shatila says:

> I knew Palestine through my father because he lived there, he remembers it… he was ten years old when he left. He knows Palestine and he taught us to love it, to dream about it… [He talked about Palestine] all the time... in every occasion… he told us about Yaffa, Haifa and the beautiful Jerusalem… he told us about the British occupation and how problems started in 1917 until 1948... [...] He implanted the idea of return in our hearts [...] in the same way I am teaching my own kids, telling them we are only guests here in this country, one day we should return, we should make this justice happen, this dream… we wish this dream could happen.[1]

Both the discussions in the private and public spaces of the camps became essential for keeping alive memories, stories and events that humanitarian organisations, as well as some states' interests attempted to erase. As ideas and history were therefore passed from generation to generation in the family context or in the alleys of the camp, hopes and dreams were kept alive too (Peteet, 2005; Sayigh, 1994; Turki, 1972, 1974).

Though the camp is the spatial tool that aims at excluding, marginalising and controlling the refugees, the preservation of their traditions as well as the development of the their political thought and activities were indeed facilitated by the presence of the camp and the concentration of refugees in the same place (see also Chapter 5). While the camp was – and for some aspects still is – an instrument of containment and control at the hands of the Lebanese authorities, the refugees turned this same containment and separation from Lebanese society to their own advantage as the Palestinians' social and economic marginalisation strengthened their sense of identity and belonging (Peteet, 2005; Sayigh, 1994; Turki, 1974). The spatial, juridical, social and economic exclusion of the Palestinian refugees from the rest of society had the effect of increasing the refugees' cohesion and reinforcing their sense of community. Therefore, exclusion and exception that are the main tools of sovereign power that renders life bare life are transformed into strategies of resistance as refugees refuse to forget their past, the reasons of their tragedy, and to give up their hopes for a return.

While the exceptionality of the camp is discussed in more depth in the following chapter, the camp became the space in which multiple strategies have been enacted to

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[1] Seif, Shatila, 24 December 2008. Interview conducted in Arabic.

overcome difficulties. Well before the refugees were officially allowed to improve their rudimentary households in the late 1950s and early 1960s, the Palestinians began constructing walls within their tents to shelter from the cold winters and adverse weather conditions. Despite the prohibition on building with solid materials that would have given the impression of permanency, many have succeeded in eluding the controls and violating the regulations of the Lebanese authorities since the mid-1950s. Ahmad, for example, a refugee in his 80s living in Shatila, told me how his wife used to get solid material and stones from Beirut public spaces in order to improve their shelter:

> We didn't have enough money... my wife brought stones. She carried them on her head... you see this wall that doesn't have any bricks? It's all made of stones.. she brought them on her head... [...] My wife brought the stones from Bir Hassan [district of south Beirut] on her head... that road was made by the French.. she took out stones from the paved pathway and brought them here.[2]

The example offered by Ahmad clearly shows how power relations occur at the same level. Power does not move vertically, downwards or upwards, but circulates horizontally on the same surface (Deleuze, 1988: 26-28). Power and resistance coexist in the space of the tent and they are in a dialogical relation of act-and-response, prohibition-and-transgression. The tent becomes the visible power of the Lebanese authorities that prevent the permanent settlement of the refugees. This power, however, meets the invisible resistance of the refugees that stone after stone challenge the Lebanese authorities' dictates on construction. As bricks or stones become materialities that reinstall power relations, refugees refuse to obey and put their wellbeing at the centre of their concerns. Petty acts, such as the theft of stones from public spaces, are instances of what Scott (1985) defines as 'incidental resistance'. We cannot, in fact argue, that Palestinian refugees' resistance through these actions is organised or would lead to revolutionary changes. While it would be a mistake to over-romanticise these acts, we cannot dismiss these agencies as insignificant. The theft of stones from public spaces and the construction within the tent is an endorsement of what is perceived to be the refugee's right: having a shelter that protects him/her from the cold

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[2] Ahmad, Shatila, 26 December 2008. Interview conducted in Arabic.

winters and severe weather conditions. Although these acts do not undermine or remove the basic structure of domination – the Lebanese authorities preventing Palestinians from building in concrete – it is a practice of self-help and self-indulgence that at the end of the day gives the refugees what they sought for – a more secure shelter – by not complying to the Lebanese authorities' dictates.

But the refugees' agency, activism and determination is also shown by their ability to provide basic services to the camps. In Shatila, electricity came only towards the end of the 1950s and it was the results of refugees' own ability to provide the service to the camp. As Sayigh (1994: 40) explains, it was an inhabitant of the camp, Abu Turki, who decided to personally meet Prime Minister Sami Solh in 1956 and later on negotiated with the Electricity Company for the provision of electricity for the camp. In doing so and personally paying for the installation and prolongation of cables, he obtained electricity that he used to rent to other camp dwellers. Through his personal negotiations and skills, and without the intercession of anybody, he was able to provide the whole camp with a service that until that moment was neglected for the people of Shatila.

After the Nakba, a new sense of enterprise was also felt in the context of working opportunities. Coming from a society that was based on the cultivation of the land, the Palestinians in Lebanon managed to either use their skills or to adapt themselves to new professions and jobs. According to law expert and Palestinian refugee in Lebanon, Souheil El-Natour, the Palestinians, even the poorest, contributed to the growth of the Lebanese economy. They may have been economically exploited and underpaid, but many refugees who worked as agricultural seasonal workers made an essential contribution to the development of the citrus cultivation as the Lebanese did not have any expertise to expand this sector.[3] Yet, agriculture was not the only sector in which the refugees worked as many learnt and developed new professional skills becoming builders, plasterers, painters, workers in the industry or opening small business or shops (Sayigh, 1994).[4]

These initiatives and the spirit of adaptation show the refugees' potential, their determination to overcome their predicament and to be more independent from the humanitarian relief. Only by moving away from a legal consideration of their condition can we uncover the multiple forms of resistance and deny any possibility of assimilating the Palestinians in Lebanon to the figure of *homo sacer* as developed by Agamben. Despite a

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[3] Insights from the interview with Souheil El-Natour, Mar Elias, 24 December 2008. Interview conducted in English.

[4] Insights from different interviews and informal conversations in Shatila during fieldwork.

network of powers that act on their life and exclude them from the benefits of citizenship, the Palestinians found their ways towards the amelioration of their condition by working hard, reinventing their roles, transferring their skills and opposing forces that would rather see their cause forgotten. This was not only manifested in their daily and most ordinary activities – working, getting basic services for the camps, discussing their condition and maintaining their traditions alive – since the refugees also developed an awareness of their political role both within the scope of the Palestinian cause as well as within Lebanese and Arab society. While in the immediate aftermath of the 1948 displacement, the Palestinians appeared as 'politically paralysed', fragmented and unable to reconstruct their society, this moment did not last for long. Mainly but not exclusively guided by the Palestinian upper class and elites, a new wave of political activism began taking shape in the 1950s in the Arab capitals (Farsoun and Zacharia, 1997: 173-174). This resulted in the establishment of the PLO and of different Palestinian unions and organisations such as the associations of workers, students and women.[5] According to Laurie Brand (1988b: 4), the PLO must in fact be seen as the natural result of the effort of all the Palestinians of the *diaspora* in shaping and rebuilding their dispersed and divided community. Yet, since the PLO was still perceived as too elitist and distant from the people's basic needs, alongside the PLO other grassroots groups and activities were established and undertaken. As the lower classes' initiatives accompanied the upper classes' organisations, Palestinian refugees' activism in Lebanon was manifested through their involvement in student unions and in the Arab Nationalist Movement (hereafter ANM) based in Beirut. In this context, the Palestinians' political awareness and potential was revealed through the enormous contribution that Palestinians gave to the foundation of this movement in the campus of the American University of Beirut in the 1950s. One of the co-founders and masterminds of the project was George Habash, a Palestinian student that afterwards also founded its own Palestinian group: the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine (PFLP) (Brynen, 1990; Cobban, 1984). As the Palestinian cause was part of the broader Arab cause, the ANM managed to unite the Palestinians and the Lebanese in their struggle against new forms of imperialism or pro-Western policies adopted by any Arab government.

While Arab nationalist tendencies united people from different national backgrounds in the Middle East, an awareness of their own Palestinian cause as distinct

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[5] In 1952 Arafat, who in 1969 would have become the PLO chairman, founded the Palestinian Students Union in Egypt. Also in Egypt, the League of the Palestinian Women was founded in 1962 while in the 1960s, members of Fatah, a guerrilla organisation based in Kuwait of which Arafat was a member and co-founder, established the Palestinian Workers Committee and Women Committee (Brand, 1988b).

from the rest of the Arab world led to the organisation of Palestinian cells and clubs as well as the establishment of elementary military training (Turki, 1972: 100). From this moment on, the Palestinians of the camps too began acquire a new and more active subjectivity as fighters as well as political actors. Underground movements rising independently from the PLO as well as guerrilla groups conflated into what later on was known as the Palestinian Resistance Movement (PRM). People joining these movements strongly believed that the achievement of their rights could be obtained only through the liberation of their land and through the military struggle as Arab states' unsuccessful diplomacy and strategies did not achieve any success.

Inspired by other Third World liberation movements, such as those developed in Algeria, Cuba, China and Vietnam, the PRM slowly began taking the upper hand and managed to shadow the efforts of the PLO which was still guided by Arab states' interests and unable to shape an independent policy (Farsoun and Zacharia, 1997: 178). However, while separate at the beginning, the PLO and the PRM became closer after the 1967 Arab defeat. The sense of defeat that dominated in the post-1967 War – the 'Six Day War' in which the Israelis crushed the Egyptian, Syrian and Jordanian armies in less than a week – was such that the inconclusive politics of the PLO and Arab states was obscured by the PRM activism and military achievements.[6] The ascendancy of the PRM and the popular support that the latter gained throughout the 1960s was such that, if the PLO still wanted to represent all the Palestinians, it had to come to terms with the grassroots resistance movement and include it in the diplomatic, political and military decisions. By 1969 the PRM completed its infiltration of the PLO by seizing the most important post as Yasser Arafat, until that moment leader of Fatah and firm antagonist of the PLO, was elected chairman (see also Brynen, 1990). From 1969 more importance and attention were reserved for the liberation struggle and the needs of the Palestinian people. Also, the ascendancy of the PRM within the official realm of politics imbued the refugees with great confidence in their own capabilities and with a new spirit and strong rejection of a 'life of eating and sleeping only' (Sayigh, 2007: 12).

'From peasants to revolutionaries', the Palestinians overcame oppression and exclusion while embracing a new optimism and hope in their future (Sayigh, 2007). The 1960s, in particular, represented a watershed for them. This was because Palestinian youth,

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[6] Starting from small raids and operations from the West Bank and Gaza well before 1967, the guerrilla groups, among which Fatah was one of the most important, gained such a popular support and approval that the PLO had to include them or facing the alternative of losing the subjects they wanted to represent (among others, Cobban, 1984)

repressed and mistreated by the Lebanese authorities during the period of the Deuxiéme Bureau, possessed the right combination of discontent and anger to be ready to act, react and fight back (Hudson, 1997: 249). Even during the harshest repression at the hands of the Lebanese authorities, the Palestinians managed to organise undercover activities and elude the controls of the secret services both within and outside the camps. As refugees began increasingly calling for the armed struggle, the uprising in Lebanon occurred gradually. If mass mobilisation could not be achieved because of the tight controls over the camps, a 'new mass atmosphere' could be recreated through the distribution of pamphlets and other undercover activities such as using Boy Scout groups to mask real purposes of training.[7] As in the 1960s new training camps were opened in Syria, Algeria and Egypt, '[g]radually the mood in the camps changed from one of patience and suppressed anger to one of revolutionary readiness, which Lebanese oppression only made more explosive' (Sayigh, 2007: 156). Networks of training were established and those who managed to receive training from abroad, once back in Lebanon could train their fellows in the camps. Though this shows the Palestinians' courage and readiness to challenge the Lebanese authorities and their veto on training and joining political activities, this was certainly done at high costs. Families of would-be fighters as well as trainers and trainees themselves were living with the constant fear of being caught and persecuted, tortured or killed. Yet, tight controls and threats to their lives did not succeed in discouraging the Palestinians. The first cross-border operation ever undertaken in Lebanon occurred in 1965 and by 1968 the number of incidents at the Lebanese-Israeli border increased to twenty-nine and hundred-and-fifty by 1969 (Hudson, 1997: 251; Brynen, 1990: 46).

As demonstrated so far, the Palestinians through their determination firmly rejected a life of exclusion. Without relying exclusively on the humanitarian relief, refugees have managed to improve their condition and to build more confidence in their possibilities by developing a new political and militant subjectivity. Despite the tight controls and oppression of the Lebanese authorities, they met up, discussed their situation and strategies to improve it, and organised activities that ultimately led to their success in liberating themselves and the camps from the repression of the Lebanese intelligence services and police. Capable of reinstalling power relations that allowed them to fight back against their oppressors, the Palestinians' agency and confidence in their own potential was essential.

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[7] Insights from the interview with Jaber Suleiman, Palestinian independent researcher, Mar Elias, 2 January 2009. Interview conducted in English.

Decentering the state and empowering people

While their tenacity is the main reason for their success, also fundamental were the support and solidarity of some Lebanese that joined them in their struggle.

Lebanese solidarity and hostility:
Essential features for the Palestinian success and failure

Lebanese support: Paving the way to the Palestinian ascendancy

Of fundamental importance for the liberation of the camps from the grip of the Lebanese authorities in 1969 was the Palestinians' own spirit of initiative and determination. Yet, as some pointed out, without the support of Lebanese civil society the ascendancy of the Palestinian resistance and the PLO in Lebanon would not have taken place (Hudson, 1997; Sayigh, 2007). The improvement of the Lebanese-Palestinian relations occurred in the context of the rise of the pan-Arab sentiments and movement. However, a great part was also played by the country sectarian system that has always impeded the Lebanese from building a common national identity and this strengthened the chance of alliance between the Palestinians and certain sects. This was an alliance that proved crucial as not only did it threaten the political *status quo* in the country, but also helped the Palestinians to free themselves from the tight control of the Lebanese authorities.

While the pan-Arab ideals were a strong factor connecting the Lebanese and the Palestinians, other internal and unresolved Lebanese issues led some to identify themselves with the Palestinians and their cause. The arbitrary way with which the Lebanese state was created was still a thorn in the side for many. Dominated by a ruling class that did not represent the whole population and kept on pursuing their own interests rather than those of the whole nation (see also Chapter 6), Lebanon was on more than one occasion at the edge of a civil war well before 1975 (Peretz, 1994; Traboulsi, 2007). Not only were there divisions over the meaning of Lebanese national identity, but struggles developed also along economic and class lines as certain sects and people remained excluded from the advantages and benefits of the economic growth of the 1950s and 1960s. Social and economic marginalisation hit the Palestinians as well as the Lebanese of the rural areas or remote regions. This was especially so for those living in the south or in the Bekaa Valley and far from urban centres as basic services like electricity, schools, clinics and hospitals

seemed luxurious infrastructures that the poor could not afford and, most of all, did not have the right to enjoy. On their part, members of the government and the ruling class, busy in strengthening their positions, focused on maintaining a political *status quo* that would have guaranteed privileges also in their own economic activities.

Dissatisfied with Lebanon's political and economic system, a very heterogeneous opposition to the government was taking shape and discontent about the Lebanese system and missing reforms soon merged with the defence of the Palestinians and their cause. Tired of the Maronite supremacy in the country despite the decline in the number of the Christians, different forces allied together to fight this political stagnation and lack of representation. The Lebanese opposition movement that included also members of the Christian sects was 'an untidy amalgam of Muslim traditionalists (Sunni and Shi'ite), Muslim radicals (left and right), secularists (left and right), pan-Arabists of every brand, socialists, student activists, trade unionists and a tiny sprinkling of Marxists' (Cobban, 1984: 65; Farsoun and Wingerter, 1981/1982: 100).

The solidarity that during the 1950s and 1960s was established between some Lebanese and the Palestinians was in fact the direct result of two main factors. On the one hand, the sharing of pan-Arab ideals led many Lebanese of the upper and low classes to sustain and support the Palestinian cause and the resistance presence in the country. On the other, the sharing of a social and economic marginalisation brought the lowest layers of Lebanese society and the Palestinians closer. As solidarity worked along poverty lines, the Shi'a community of the south felt a strong affinity with the Palestinians and became one of the firmest supporters of their rights and cause. There is no coincidence in the fact that '[t]he rise of the Palestinian resistance movement in the middle and late 1960s occurred at the beginning of a period of political, economic and social stagnation in Lebanon' (Hudson, 1978: 262). According to a survey undertaken by the daily Lebanese newspaper Al-Nahar in 1968, 79% of the Lebanese looked with favour at the Palestinian resistance's activities and this support increased in the following years (Brynen, 1990: 47, 56; Hudson, 1978: 264). Discontent with the government and solidarity with the Palestinians were also manifested in street demonstrations taking place in the second half of the 1960s and first half of the 1970s (see also Kapeliuk, 1969; Traboulsi, 2007: 269-170). While protesting the government's inability to take care of their citizens through the approval of the necessary reforms, during these demonstrations people also raised concerns for the inadequacy of the Lebanese army and doubts over its role. As Israeli retaliatory attacks were increasing following Palestinian guerrilla operations at the border or attacks to Israeli interests abroad,

the Lebanese army remained impassive. To some, the armed forces were not an institution aimed at the defence of the country, but an instrument of oppression in the hands of the ruling class to stop the civil unrest and opposition (Traboulsi, 2007: 174-175).

The wide support for the Palestinian cause seriously limited the government and the army chances to crush the Palestinian guerrilla groups, especially after the Arab defeat of 1967. It is precisely in civil society that one must identify the strength of the Palestinian resistance movement. While in Lebanon this manifested support led the government to 'indulge' their citizens to avoid worse confrontations, in Jordan this did not occur and the authorities easily crushed and expelled the Palestinian movement in 1971 when the PLO transferred its headquarters to Beirut. Unlike Jordan, in Lebanon the mobilisation of the masses made the difference. A Palestinian militant interviewed by Rosemary Sayigh (2007: 171) explains how they managed to liberate the camps:

> What helped the liberation of the camps was the state of mobilisation of the Lebanese masses, which prevented the authorities from hitting the camps fiercely. It wasn't the force inside the camps, or the quantity of arms, but the mood of the masses, and the continuous demonstrations that paralysed the state.

These open demonstrations for support of the Palestinian cause led the government to sign the Cairo Agreement on November 2, 1969. This accord officially liberated the camp from the control of the Lebanese authorities, handed the camp security and administration over to the Palestinian Armed Struggle Command – a sort of police body attached to and controlled by the PLO – and granted the resistance the right to conduct its struggle from Lebanese territory. As Sayigh (2007: 163) points out, '[t]he course of the Revolution was thus quite different in Lebanon from Jordan, with a much higher degree of mass spontaneity, a closer alliance between the Palestinians and local forces, and more lasting effects in terms of autonomy of the camps'. The Lebanese mobilisation was therefore one of the essential ingredients for the success of the Palestinian movement in Lebanon. To this power of the masses no army and no government could do anything to impede the ascendancy of the PLO in the 1970s.

Decentering the state and empowering people

Perhaps overcoming national differences was not difficult as a sense of national belonging in the Middle East at the time was rather weak because of the recent divisions and creations of states out of the collapsed Ottoman Empire. To some extent, it can be affirmed that the Lebanese-Palestinian solidarity resembles Agamben's (2001, 2005b) notion of 'whatever being'. In thinking about a new politics and ways of escaping the net of sovereign power and the production of bare life, Agamben thinks of a 'community without presuppositions' formed by whatever singularities with no particular sense of belonging and claiming no identity (2005b: 65). The whatever being 'has no identity, it is not determinate with respect to a concept, but neither is it simply indeterminate; rather it is determinate only through its relation to an idea, that is, to the totality of its possibilities' (p. 67). In this context, one might be able to recognise a politics of whatever being embodied by the cohesion of the Lebanese and the Palestinians in protesting against the government and its policies. As a politics that is not mediated by any sense of belonging or any sense of common identity, the extremely heterogeneous opposition movement in Lebanon was simply a struggle between the state and the non-state, between the state and the humanity (pp. 85-87). For some aspects, in fact, the Lebanese and the Palestinians in that moment were whatever beings as they did not possess any common feature or identity that they could assert. Moreover, these forms of solidarity between different individuals with different backgrounds could be assimilated to the rejection of the idea of state or the firm opposition to the drawing of boundaries that separate people. This mass mobilisation certainly shook Lebanon as a separate entity and state. As Agamben argues, the whatever being is sovereign power's worse enemy as the sovereign can no longer draw lines and distinctions because no belonging or identity is claimed. The Lebanese government became all for sudden impotent, unable to cast out the Palestinians, unable to make the separation and distinction between its citizens and the refugees, between Lebanese civilians and Palestinian resistance (see also Edkins, 2007).

While the power of the state is undeniable as it is in a privileged position to decide, narrate and represent in this way influencing the citizens' perceptions of danger and risk (see Campbell, 1998b), the alliance between the Lebanese and the Palestinians clearly shows how civil society can decide too, by reacting and defending the refugees and their cause. This alliance and solidarity of a good part of the host society led to the ascendancy of the PLO and the resistance movement and was destined to last until the first years of the Lebanese civil war.

Decentering the state and empowering people

The state-within-the-state era: Strengthened solidarity and cooperation

Despite the fact that Lebanon recognised the PLO in 1964, the year of its establishment, it was only in 1971 that the PLO transferred its headquarters to Lebanon. Thanks to the support of many Lebanese, it was not difficult for the PLO to make of Beirut and Lebanon the centre of its political and military activities until 1982, the year of its withdrawal. Although Lebanon for some years represented a much more favourable host for the PLO and the resistance when compared to Jordan, the Palestinian movement is today remembered mostly for its military might, for provoking massive Israeli retaliations, and for its involvement in the Lebanese civil war when civilians were killed and massacred. But what is sometimes forgotten in the account of the Lebanese today is the extensive infrastructure and opportunities that the PLO created and established in those years prior to 1982. Not only could the PLO be considered a true 'government-in-exile' taking care of its own people, but it also created job opportunities and services from which the same Lebanese, especially those neglected by their own state and government, benefitted (Farsoun and Zacharia, 1997: 188).

While today those years are remembered in negative terms and known as the 'state-within-the-state' era, the PLO never aimed at intruding upon Lebanon's internal affairs or turning the country into a new homeland for the Palestinian people. The main goal of the PLO was to reconstruct the Palestinian divided community and, most of all, to develop political, social and economic institutions in preparation for the birth of a Palestinian state on any piece of land liberated through the military struggle or diplomacy. To this end, emphasis was also placed on nation building, the preservation of the Palestinian culture and traditions and the development of state-like institutions and departments (Brynen, 1989,1990; Cobban, 1984; Rubenberg, 1983a, 1983b).

Beyond the unions of students (General Union of Palestinian Students), workers (General Union of Palestinian Workers), women (General Union of Palestinian Women), teachers (General Union of Palestinian Teachers) and others already established in the 1950s and 1960s by the Palestinians themselves, the PLO developed different departments to meet the refugees' economic and social needs. Along with the Palestinian National Fund that operated as a ministry of economy and as department of revenues, other organisations functioned as state ministries. The Institute of Social Affairs and Welfare for the Families of the Martyrs and Prisoners, for instance, provided social and economic support for the families of those killed in battle or imprisoned, and also paid compensation for those

families that lost a relative during the Israeli retaliatory attacks in Lebanon. This latter service was extended to Lebanese families who lost someone during the Israeli bombings. Yet, the Institute of Social Affairs was not the only one that opened its services to Lebanese citizens without distinctions. The Palestinian Red Crescent Society (PRCS) that operated as the PLO health department took care of the prevention and cure of the Palestinians supplementing the poor health services provided by UNRWA. As in Lebanon the refugees have always been denied access to Lebanese health facilities, by 1982 the PRCS was running eleven hospitals and sixty clinics in Lebanon only (Rubenberg, 1983b). While these services were not free for anyone as a nominal fee was applied, the Palestinian health care was open to the Lebanese that found the PRCS machinery at the vanguard and its services much cheaper than those of Lebanese hospitals and clinics. Not only were the PRCS facilities opened to non-Palestinians, but also its staff included Palestinians doctors and nurses as well as Lebanese, Iraqis and more as a clear sign that no discrimination was applied, and that Palestinians services and opportunities were open to anyone (ibid).

But the PLO improvement of refugees' lives included other spheres such as that of education. Despite the official adoption of the Lebanese syllabus for the UNRWA schools, UNRWA education program was integrated by special curricula developed by the PLO through its Palestine Planning Centre that issued new textbooks for children that included the teaching of the history of Palestine and its traditions (Sayigh, 2007: 184). This sector was also improved by opening kindergartens in which Palestinian culture was taught and by establishing the Open University (Rubenberg, 1983a: 55-57).[8] Moreover, interested in creating a self-sufficient and skilled society, the PLO and some Palestinian factions offered scholarships to Palestinians to study in universities abroad mainly, but not exclusively, in Eastern European countries with which the PLO had good diplomatic relations.

As the right to work was severely restricted for them at least until 1969 and as Lebanon's economy was in decline, the PLO also created job opportunities through the Palestine Martyrs Works Society, better known as SAMED. Established as a vocational training for the orphans in Jordan in 1970, SAMED had two main aims: providing training and jobs for the Palestinians; and manufacturing products for the Palestinian community such as leather goods, handicrafts, clothing, and so on, at prices that could be more easily afforded. In Lebanon SAMED built about forty-six factories employing two thirds of the

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[8] Though Rubenberg (1983a: 55-57) talks extensively about the Open University no other information about this institution seems available.

Decentering the state and empowering people

Palestinian labour force and hiring also Lebanese citizens (Doraï, 2006: 125; Rubenberg, 1983b: 66).

In addition to providing jobs and taking care of the Palestinians' welfare, the PLO expanded its state-like institutions and jurisdictions beyond the space of the refugee camps through the establishment of Palestinian prisons, tribunals and courts to adjudicate the cases involving Palestinians, both civilians and combatants. Although this could be read as an attempt to challenge Lebanese sovereignty and jurisdiction, the establishment and development of these institutions was not a way to escape the Lebanese judiciary system as cases in which a Palestinian and a Lebanese were involved were adjudicated by the Lebanese courts only (Peteet, 1987; Sayigh, 1994: 94).

All these institutions and infrastructures created a sense of independence and autonomy that the refugees did not experience before. Even though the refugees managed to react and to escape the total submission to the humanitarian agencies and the Lebanese authorities even before the PLO's arrival, the creation of Palestinian institutions insinuated in them a new sense of pride. Proud of being able to take care of themselves, of being taken care of by their Palestinian representatives as well as being able to extend the services to the poor Lebanese neglected by their own government. This institutional, political and economic growth benefited Lebanon too as the whole Palestinian economy in Lebanon 'generat[ed] more than 15 per cent of the Lebanese gross national product, and [...] the PLO and affiliated institutions had created 10,000 jobs directly and 30,000 indirectly' for Palestinian refugees and Lebanese citizens (Hudson, 1997: 254).

The inclusion of the Lebanese strengthened the already good relations between them and the Palestinians. As Peteet (2005: 81-82) suggests, this move was essential as it aimed at 'a distance-reducing intervention with the intent of putting into practice a political rhetoric of sameness as victims of dominant economic and political systems'. As the PLO and the Palestinian institutions substituted themselves to the Lebanese government in the care of the most neglected Palestinians as well as Lebanese, national boundaries no longer made sense. Geographical proximity (living in the same areas) and the sharing of a marginalised condition offered the 'glue' that for long would have kept them together in their challenge of the Lebanese state and government.

As Souheil El-Natour explains about the nature of the relations between the Lebanese and the Palestinians and the great contribution that the different Palestinian groups along with the PLO gave to Lebanon:

We were something different also because we gave the Lebanese ways on how to think about their rights. For example, Bint Jbail [village in South Lebanon]... if a Lebanese had an accident [...] the only small and unqualified hospital was in Tyre and there was no asphalted rout [road], and to take any Lebanese ill [...] to Tyre it took usually six hours by donkeys and etc. When the Palestinian commands [commandos] began having their centres, we began to asphalt small alleys [...] we went with our jeeps and land rovers etc. We began to bring a lot of stuff for the injured feda'yeen [combatants]. So the people, they began receiving a lot of capacities "What is the state? What is the meaning of state? Why these people are offering all assistance like that and they are treating us like them. So this is equality, this is what we want"... and that's why a lot of Lebanese they began to say "If those leaders of us already twenty, thirty years of [from] the creation of Lebanon they didn't visit our areas, never! They didn't pay a penny for us, for the schools etc... The Palestinians are making hospitals, are giving medicaments, even surgical operations and a lot of others are coming and working and when there is a moment of hardship they are cooperating with us. Why these differences?"[9]

Despite the fact that the Lebanese benefitted from the presence of the PLO and the establishment of its civilian institutions, hosting a resistance movement could be a serious security and political risk. As Brynen (1990: 10) maintains, the Palestinian revolution constituted a significant threat in Lebanon as:

By their very nature revolutions pose a standing challenge to the socio-economic and political structure of the states, and more specifically to the social, economic, and political positions of their dominant classes [...] The insurgents cannot advance a socio-political agenda for their own country (agrarian reform,

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[9] Souheil El-Natour, Mar Elias, 24 December 2008. Interview conducted in English.

redistribution of wealth, democratisation, and so forth) without potentially causing similar questions to be raised within the host sanctuary. So too revolutionary ideology, organisation and the notion of armed struggle may spread to groups within the sanctuaries in which they shelter.

While it is true that 'Lebanon had the ingredients for a civil war prior to the emergence of the Palestinian commandos', equally true is the fact that '[t]he Moslem [sic] and underprivileged elements of the population saw in the commandos a strong ally against the ruling elites who represented the status quo' (Nassar, 1991: 135). Taking advantage of the Palestinian institutions and supporting their cause, many Lebanese also joined the Palestinian resistance. Hoping to challenge the political stagnation and the elite, joining the resistance also meant getting a secure job as fighter of the Palestinian cause. Among those that joined the resistance there is Fadi, a Lebanese married to a Palestinian and living not far from Shatila camp that I encountered in one of my visits to the surrounding areas of the camp. He joined Fatah ranks in the 1970s and even though he abandoned the military struggle in the late 1970s, he still joins meetings of Palestinian groups and organisations. Having grown up in Shatila camp with the Palestinians, he felt that joining their cause and the resistance was a natural outcome. But he was not the only one in his family as his father and brother joined other Palestinian factions and movements. Making jokes on the divergences that from time to time arose between the different Palestinian groups, he stated that 'if there was a misunderstanding among the organisations, we had troubles at home'.[10]

As many Lebanese took part to the resistance widening the already deep fracture in Lebanese society, clashes between the resistance and the Lebanese army and militias defending the *status quo* were inevitable. While 'essential ingredients' for a civil confrontation were already present since the establishment of Greater Lebanon (1920), the situation precipitated paving the way to the outbreak of the Lebanese civil war in 1975. Even though the PLO and Fatah decided not to intervene at the early stages of the civil war (only the Rejection Front led by the Democratic Front for the Liberation of Palestine and Saiqa were involved in the fighting), the siege of the Palestinian camps of East Beirut (Dbayeh, Tell El-Zaatar[11] and Jisr El-Basha) prompted an intervention and indirectly

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[10] Fadi, Sabra, 26 December 2008. Interview conducted in Arabic.
[11] This camp is also known with the name of Dikwaneh.

proclaimed the official engagement of the Palestinians in the fighting. While the war started because of sensitive internal affairs and inequalities, the Palestinian resistance and civilian presence represented the fuse that led to the outbreak of a war that would last for about fifteen years.

From solidarity to the break-up: The failure of the Palestinian movement and the abandonment of the civilians

During the first years of the civil war the alliance between the Lebanese opposition and the Palestinians persisted, but solidarity bonds soon weakened and broke under the pressure of multiple events and factors. Until the 1970s some Lebanese supported the Palestinian resistance, but the attitude soon changed, especially for the Shi'a community. While the reasons for this change are multiple, two main motivations must be found in the misbehaviour of some Palestinian fighters and the repeated Israeli attacks and invasions, for which the Lebanese civilians of the south paid the highest price because of the presence of the resistance in Lebanon.

It is worth noting that the signature of the Cairo Agreement in 1969 did not leave the Palestinians completely free to launch operations from the Lebanese territory. According to the unofficial texts of the agreement (among others see Shiblak, 1998: 25-26), Palestinian resistance had to limit the launch of their operation to the sole Arqoub region (south east of Lebanon, close to the Lebanese-Israeli border).[12] Moreover, fighters were allowed to infiltrate Israel from the Lebanese border but had to avoid cross-border fire that would have endangered Lebanese sovereignty and security provoking Israeli retaliatory operations. Palestinian resistance groups had also to establish training camps and military positions at least one or two kilometres far from towns or villages.[13] The violation of these regulations, however, had serious consequences for the civilians, especially for the Shi'a community inhabiting mainly in the southern areas of the country where the resistance presence was more concentrated and triggered more Israeli retaliations.

Without doubt Israeli strategy was that of hitting the civilians and inhabited areas in order to destabilise Lebanese support for the Palestinian resistance. In the 1960s and 1970s

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[12] As mentioned in note 18 of Chapter 3, the official text of the Cairo Agreement has never been published.

[13] See FCO 17-1708 "Reports on fedayeen in Lebanon 1972", the National Archives (London), newspaper article dated 19 September 1971 and entitled "Le 'mémorandum' libanais limite la presence des Fedayin au Haut – Arkoub", source unknown.

increasing attacks on villages, crops and groves began turning the Lebanese population against the Palestinians. Not only did this lead to the killing of Lebanese civilians, but also to the destruction of all the economic activities in areas that the Lebanese government had already long disregarded.[14] As the costs of the Palestinian resistance presence increased, Lebanese public opinion became less supportive of the Palestinian cause and less tolerant of their presence in Lebanon (see also Khalili, 2006, 2007; Sayigh, 1994: 168-179).

While before 1975, the PLO respected the provisions of the Cairo Agreement and to some extent managed to control groups that did not follow the restrictions, with the outbreak of the civil war in 1975 '[t]heft, assault, corruption, and extortion by ill-disciplined guerrillas became all too common amid the chaos of the war' (Brynen, 1994: 85). Though these acts during the civil war were committed by Palestinians as well as Lebanese, according to Brynen the excesses perpetrated by the Palestinians 'attracted particular opprobrium, partly because of the scale of the Palestinian military presence, but even more so because they were committed by non-Lebanese'. The decline of the image of the Palestinian cause led the inhabitants of the south to organise their own militia to counter-balance and resist the presence of Palestinian groups (see also Farsoun and Zacharia, 1997: 165; and Fisk, 2001: 109).

The definitive collapse of former alliances between the Palestinians and the Lebanese occurred in 1982 following the Israeli invasion denominated 'Operation Peace for Galilee' that left 19,000 dead, 30,000 injured and thousands of internally displaced people, both Lebanese and Palestinian (Brynen, 1994: 86; see also Jansen, 1982). During the first years of the civil war, Palestinians and the camps were attacked by Christian militias belonging to the Lebanese Front that aimed at maintaining the Maronite political dominance, but after the 1982 Israeli invasion attacks endured by the Palestinians were waged also by their former allies. As the consequences of the Palestinian civilian and military presence were far too visible and perceptible to the Lebanese, sharp military confrontations followed and culminated in the so-called 'War of the Camps'. Between 1985 and 1987 Palestinian camps of Beirut, Saida and Tyre were besieged and attacked by the Shi'a militia Amal. In search of political and social emancipation for the Shi'a community in Lebanon after years of abandonment, militia Amal used the Palestinian card to gain recognition of its fundamental role in the punishment of those who, it argued, for years had been causing insecurity and sorrow to the Lebanese people. Taking advantage of

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[14] Between 1968 and 1974 Israeli army violated Lebanese territory 3,000 times, killed about 880 civilians, and inhabitants of the south were forced to leave (Brynen, 1994: 85).

the Syrian support and following Lebanese public opinion calling for the disarmament of the camps, Amal's siege and repression was ferocious. As the PLO was forced to withdraw from Lebanon in 1982, Palestinian refugees were left unprotected or with a handful of civilians that had only basic and rudimentary training. With this violence taking place, it was difficult to restore normal relations (see also Peteet, 2005; Sayigh, 1994). The consequences of this breakup are particularly manifested in the aftermath of the civil war when mistrust and discrimination still seem to prevail.

Palestinian refugee's life in the post-civil war era: Between marginalisation and resistance

Lebanese government and civil society: United against the refugees?

The Lebanese-Palestinian split during the civil war was followed by a dramatisation of the antagonism of the Lebanese towards the Palestinians in the post-conflict era. Before the outbreak of the civil war Lebanese society was deeply fragmented and divided on the presence of the Palestinian resistance in Lebanon. However, in the aftermath of the war it seems that the 'Palestinian factor' gave the Lebanese the cohesion and unity that for long had been lacking. If the support of the Palestinians before the civil war was strongly divisive, hostility towards the Palestinians became unifying in the post-conflict era (Peteet, 1996). As the Lebanese focused on the reconstruction of their shattered and destroyed country, the only issue on which they could agree was the exclusion and repression of the refugees. Depicted as being responsible for the outbreak of the civil war, for the significant loss of human lives, and for the fragmentation of Lebanese society and politics, these convictions about the Palestinians managed to keep the nation united for a while as the refugees became the scapegoat for all the political, securitarian and economic problems of the country. Today, as much as some would welcome their right to live with dignity and would favourably welcome the ease on restrictions placed on them at multiple levels, many see their presence as a challenge that Lebanon cannot afford.

The Taïf Agreements, which officially marked the end of the civil war in 1989, managed to unite all the Lebanese groups involved in the conflict who agreed on one important point. At Taïf (in Saudi Arabia) provisions were made to amend the constitution in a way that the granting of any right to Palestinians became unconstitutional. The

preamble of the constitution, which was added in the early 1990s, declares that Lebanon is the homeland of the Lebanese and that each and every Lebanese has the right to live in any part of the country. However, as the preamble goes on to declare, there shall be no discrimination based on any kind of belonging, no fragmentation or partition of the territory as well as no '*tawtin*' (settlement), a clear reference to the Palestinians in the country.[15] It is precisely on the ground of this that the Palestinians are 'legally' discriminated against in Lebanon since, according to the Lebanese, granting the Palestinians basic economic and social rights might constitute the first step towards their definitive settlement. Indeed, it is according to this interpretation and spirit that the 2001 amendment of the law on the acquisition of real estate by foreigners has been approved as it clearly prevents the Palestinians from buying or inheriting any real estate (see Chapter 3).[16]

If before the civil war many Lebanese so vehemently supported the Palestinian civilian and military presence, in its aftermath the Lebanese government is left almost undisturbed in its issue of discriminatory law and orders targeting the Palestinians and their ability to buy or inherit any property. Perhaps overlooking the fact that many rich Gulf Arabs are buying the most expensive and luxurious apartments in the reconstructed centre of Beirut, web user 'maria' commented an article online on the Palestinians' civil rights published on the Lebanese weblog 'Ya Libnan':

> [...] Beseides [sic], libon [sic] is a tiny country, if you allow them [the Palestinians] to start buying up land and property, palestinians [sic] from all over the world will buy up libon, making it their homeland, further creating price hikes, and possibly opening up more militant facilitation thruout [sic] the country.[17]

Although a proper survey on Lebanese perceptions on Palestinian's acquisition of real estate has not been undertaken, it seems that 'maria''s concerns may be quite common.

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[15] For the text of the Lebanese constitution in Arabic, see http://www.lp.gov.lb/SecondaryAr.Aspx?id=12 (last accessed November 2011).

[16] As the government as well as the Lebanese reject the naturalisation and permanent settlement of the refugees, timid protests raised by some MPs judging the law as a clear violation of basic human rights did not result in the withdrawal of the amendment that was approved by the parliament (El-Natour, 2003).

[17] See in the newspapers and online articles section, Ya Libnan, 2010.

Conducted in 1994, the Hilal Khashan survey, in fact, showed quite worrying results as fourty percent of the participants stated that they would have even reacted militarily to a potential *tawtin* – naturalisation (Haddad, 2000, 2003; Sayigh, 1995a). Whether the Lebanese support the Palestinians' right of return because they truly believe in their cause or because they are too scared of the Palestinians' settlement, their naturalisation is still firmly rejected and basic human rights denied.

Indirectly comparing their acquisition of real estate to a plague that would end only with the total occupation of Lebanon, the Lebanese today seem united on the refugees' marginalisation. As symptoms of biopolitical concerns for the future of the country in a moment of difficult reconciliation after the horrors of the civil war, the Lebanese needed to identify a common danger or enemy to be able to build a new sense of national identity and peace. While the identification of the external danger fell on Israel because of the ongoing occupation of part of South Lebanon until May 2000, the internal danger has been produced through the Palestinians identified as the cause of all troubles, the war, and fragmentation of the Lebanese body (on the production of internal and external security dangers, see Campbell, 1998b).

In this context, and following Soguk's (1999) understanding, the refugees seem to no longer represent a potential disruption of the order of the nation-state. If refugees' presence might have been unsettling during the period preceding the outbreak of the war, in the post-conflict era quite the opposite occurs. Rather than disturbing or disrupting the state and the nation, since 1990s the Palestinians in Lebanon could be seen as 'recuperative of sovereign practices' and essential factors for the unification of a divided nation. From threats, refugees become resources to reaffirm the Lebanese nation (or alleged so), the state and sovereign control. While control of the refugees' spaces is still not achieved for reasons that are explored in the next chapter, management of the Palestinian life have been re-installed through the issue of discriminatory laws and decrees that this time do not find any opposition from civil society. As law and society go hand in hand and influence each other in the treatment of the Palestinians, refugees become an essential otherness that 'help[s] remake the conventional language in which the tales of the so-called citizenry, national community, and territorial state are told' (Soguk, 1999: 14-15). As Soguk goes on to suggest, laws and decrees are fundamental instruments of power that 'work as sites or arenas for the articulation and rearticulation of a specific program of government', inform behaviours and 'act as grids for perception and evaluation of things' (p. 98). While nationality laws constitute the best examples of the power of law to include some and

exclude others, a plethora of other administrative orders and decrees refine the definition of whom should be included in a national community and whom should be excluded and stripped of basic rights. The denial of the right to work, restrictions on the right of movement or the right to own real estate belong to the set of acts and legal dispositions that define the alienness of the Palestinians in everyday life. As law becomes the performative act through which the state constitutes itself as a specific political and national community excluding the others from the enjoyment of basic rights and protection, the absence of any opposition to it may represent a tacit consent. Indeed, while the government, parliament and state have the prerogative of issuing laws, decrees and administrative orders and the latter have the power to influence the public opinion, acceptance or refusal of these could still be civil society's choice. If laws and orders have an impact on the way people think about themselves, their position and rights within a political community, civil society must not be taken as passive and receptive only. As law does not exist "above" or "apart from" human society and never as 'a timeless and acontextual body of knowledge', law also becomes a central battle field in which 'political struggles, rights and realities are enacted and contested' (White, 2002: 1057). Never above politics. Never objective. But deeply embedded in struggles for power, rights, freedom, law must be understood as the 'codification of hegemonic interests and as a potent site for empowering [or excluding] different groups' (p. 1060).

Fundamental was the Lebanese support for the liberation of the refugees from the oppression of the Lebanese authorities in 1969. Yet, today Lebanese acceptance of the discriminations that the Palestinians endure in their everyday life is perhaps the symptom that the Lebanese rather than reconciling with the Palestinians, have reconciled more with their authorities. In this context, illuminating is the case of the Qrayya project proposed in the early 1990s by some politicians to relocate the Palestinians displaced from the civil war in a plot of land in the region of Al-Shouf (South of Beirut). As public indignation soon manifested, waves of protests led the cabinet to withdraw the proposal leaving many Palestinian families homeless (El-Natour, 2003; Sayigh, 1995a, 1995b).

As government and society agree on the exclusion of the Palestinians, the power of public opinion should not be underestimated. As Connolly (2005: 143) contends, '[c]itizen participation in the ethos of sovereignty takes place through the micropolitics of sovereignty'. Connolly means that sovereignty cannot be identified with government decisions only, but oscillates 'between the official site of sovereignty and the institutionally embedded ethos flowing into it'. As it happens during the rise of two of the

most totalitarian systems (Nazism and fascism), citizens may provide passive support to marginalisation and exclusion (pp. 144-145). A role, that of civil society, that Agamben seems to dismiss and neglect in favour of a focus on the state's sovereignty. As civil society is 'a permanent matrix of political power' (Foucault, 2008: 303), the support of ordinary Lebanese allowed the Palestinians to liberate and emancipate themselves. Yet, their tacit consent to discriminatory policies today contributes to the refugees' further marginalisation. However, as much as the state and host society are hostile towards the Palestinians, resistance and coping strategies are still a prerogative of a community that legally deprived of their rights still fights to improve its condition.

The Palestinian refugees and the 'quiet encroachment'

While in the post-conflict era discrimination and marginalisation seem to prevail, the Palestinians are not completely at the mercy of legal, social and economic exclusion. As the political and juridical value of their life is denied by a plethora of laws and orders that strip them of the enjoyment of basic human rights – right to work, to own property, to travel as discussed in the previous chapter – the Palestinians are still able to resist forces that deem them disposable. If we focus on the refugees' everyday and most ordinary practices, we might see the development of different strategies that allow them to survive despite the harsh living conditions. Similar to what Scott (1985: 295-303) has defined as 'incidental resistance', there are multiple ways and gestures through which the Palestinian counter their discrimination.

In an attempt to get more rations, in the first years of their displacement the Palestinians avoided registering the deaths in their families or marriages with UNRWA. From informal chats and conversations with refugees, it seems that this practice is still used. As the UNRWA relief decreased, 'cheating' on their registrations and numbers is a way to cope with continuous deprivation. In one of my encounters in the neighbourhood of Sabra, I had the chance to meet Mona, a Lebanese widow of a Palestinian man who stopped receiving the help from UNRWA when her son reached adulthood. To UNRWA it does not matter if the son is unemployed as just the fact of being an adult is sufficient to withdraw the relief to the family as potentially he could provide for them. Zahra, the woman that accompanied me in my visits and encounters in the camp, urged her to 'cheat' in order to get more help. This is perhaps a method already used by other refugees in the hope to get extra rations; thus Zahra advised Mona not to tell UNRWA that her

unemployed daughter Nadia is getting married. The registration of her daughter's marriage with UNRWA and her future husband being able to provide for her would not give Mona the chance to claim help for herself. If she keeps Nadia registered with her household, the mother would be able to show that two unemployed women with an underage boy (Mona's son), requiring treatment for an illness, cannot afford to live without assistance. In this way being the widow of a Palestinian with Palestinian children to sustain, she would be registered in the 'special hardship cases' program that helps families living in extreme poverty. In turn, this would provide them with extra rations.[18]

'Cheating' on numbers is not the only way to try to improve their condition. Prevented from working in many menial and qualified jobs, the Palestinians in Lebanon are included in the Lebanese system by virtue of their own exclusion. As this logic leads them to be exploited, refugees throughout the years have been adapting themselves to this discrimination by elaborating new strategies to cope with everyday expenses and difficulties to guarantee their survival. While it seems that recently in 2005 and summer 2010 restrictions on the right to work have been eased up and work permits could be obtained for free, until 2010 for Palestinian refugees obtaining the permits has always been difficult and expensive, costing up to $1,300 for one year only (Knudsen, 2007: 13).

Perhaps it would be too early to judge if the legal changes applied up until now will actually relieve the Palestinians from the economic marginality to which they have been confined, but other strategies have been adopted to be able to work and sustain themselves. Hanafi and Tiltness (2008) suggest that despite the harsh restrictions, the Palestinians manage to find some opportunities overcoming legal barriers to their employability. Although for Palestinians today it is very difficult to access higher education due to their difficult economic situation, those that manage to get a degree still have a chance to work in areas related to their areas of study. Among the refugees interviewed by Hanafi and Tiltness, ninety-three percent are considered to be professional workers. According to Hanafi and Tiltness (2008) and their sample, UNRWA is one of the main providers of job opportunities as it employs about thirty-seven percent of Palestinian graduates for professions in which they have been trained, and an additional twenty-two percent of Palestinian graduates that are employed as semi-professionals. Another nine percent of graduates find jobs through the PRCS or other NGOs while thirteen percent work with the PLO or other political factions.

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[18] Insights from interview with Mona, Sabra, 13 November 2008. Interview conducted in Arabic.

The refugees do not need a work permit to work with UNRWA or the Palestinian organisations, but this is required for working with other institutions. As according to the reciprocity principle, Palestinians would not be allowed to work in certain professions – law is barred to all foreigners – the only option for them is to be employed without a work permit. This means that they constantly have to maintain a low-profile in the work place and hide from potential Lebanese authorities' checks and controls. Although underpaid, Palestinian architects and engineers, for instance, manage to work informally for some Lebanese enterprises or 'Palestinian' companies such as the 'Khatib & Alami' – an architectural and engineering enterprise founded and owned by Palestinians who, even if they acquired Lebanese citizenship, keep on providing jobs for their former compatriots. Alternatively if they wish to work independently, since Palestinian engineers and architects cannot officially sign off on projects, they can do so by working in tandem with a Lebanese colleague who could sign the papers or by 'hiring' a Lebanese professional to provide the signatures.[19]

The same could be said for doctors. For the latter it is impossible to satisfy the reciprocity principle; they can either work with the Palestinian institutions, UNRWA, or work for Lebanese hospitals informally. This is the case of Dr. Suleiman, a Palestinian I met in Shatila who received a scholarship from the PLO and studied medicine in Spain and Cuba. After several specialisations obtained in different countries, he decided to go back to Lebanon, but practicing his profession here is impossible because of the work restrictions. The only way to have a secure job as a doctor was to open a clinic in Shatila camp. As refugee camps in Lebanon are increasingly becoming true spaces of exception, out of reach of the Lebanese authorities – as we shall see in the next chapter – these spaces provide opportunities that are severely limited or restricted outside the camps. Unhappy with his condition and worried for the future of his children who are studying medicine too but will not be able to work in Lebanon unless restrictions are lifted, Dr. Suleiman sometimes works for Lebanese hospitals. His specialisations made his name well known in the sector and some Lebanese doctors prefer to 'hire' him unofficially for some surgery operations to offer their patients the best treatment. While this allows him to increase his income and that of the family, he feels constantly discriminated against. Not paid as a Lebanese would

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[19] Hanafi and Tiltness 2008 and insights from different interviews and encounters during the fieldwork.

be for the same job, he gets only twenty percent of the costs of the operation as the Lebanese doctor 'hiring' him retains eighty percent.[20]

The ways in which the Palestinians manage to cope despite the harsh economic and social exclusion resonate widely with both Bayat's (2010) and Scott's (1985) reflections. While Foucault's reflections are central to the conceptualisation that wherever there is power there is resistance, Bayat (2010: 54) suggests that if it is true that such conceptualisation is essential to recognise the agency of the oppressed, equally important is to remember that 'although power circulates, it does so unevenly'. In contrast to social movements that are a more organised, collective and public platform to claim the rights that some do not have, Bayat develops the concept of the 'nonmovement' and 'quiet encroachment' as strategies utilised by the excluded to survive. While social movements make explicit demands to authorities, 'nonmovement actors directly practise what they claim' as, not guided by an ideology of a leadership, the disenfranchised survive 'through direct action in their very zones of exclusion' (pp. 19; 5). Rather than performing a 'politics of protest' typical of social movements, working informally, tapping water and electricity, not paying taxes, not registering deaths in order to get more rations are all ways through which the Palestinians perform a 'politics of practice' or 'incidental resistance' as in Scott's (1985) words. Undeniable is the fact that recognising their basic human rights would be more desirable and in line with principles of social justice, but these 'collective actions of non-collective actors' resemble a chorus of unplanned protest and resistance. While open subversive actions and resistance would be easily crushed and overthrown, these unplanned and silent practices could achieve more. In Scott's (1985: 32) words, 'the massive withdrawal of compliance [with laws and regulations] is in a sense more radical' as they directly enact what they claim with no need of direct confrontation with the state authorities.

While these coping strategies are still today at the expenses of the excluded and the disenfranchised as no right is recognised to them, the unconscious collective agency of hundreds of Palestinian doctors, engineers, architects and other professionals, who throughout the years have kept on working behind the scenes and have been underpaid, could lead to a potential success and social and economic change. As their individual, discreet and prolonged ordinary acts render their cumulative effect visible, economic advantages to be deduced from the Palestinian work may be rather appealing. Particularly

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[20] Insights from interview with Dr. Suleiman, Shatila, 26 December 2008. Interview conducted in Spanish and English.

illuminating are the words of a Lebanese official I met during my fieldwork in Beirut as he expresses the desire to change the discriminatory laws towards the Palestinians. Aware that many Palestinian doctors, engineers or architects manage to practice their professions 'under the table', he affirms that 'it's better to make it official, public so that the government can benefit from taxes'.[21] While one must always be careful in labelling these unplanned collective gestures as conscious resistance as refugees see these practices as mere strategies of survival that do not change the system, the success of this unorganised movement comes when authorities decide to surrender and grant them the rights that so silently they have been claiming. In Foucault's (2008: 307) words:

> The history of humanity in its overall effects, its continuity, and in its general and recurrent forms […] is nothing other than the perfectly logical, decipherable, and identifiable form of a series of forms arising from blind initiatives, egoistic interests, and calculations which individuals only ever see in terms of themselves. If you multiply these calculations over time and get them to work, the economist say, the entire community will enjoy ever increasing benefits.

Though more needs to be done for the Palestinians to be able to live in dignity, since 2005 some restrictions on menial jobs regarding their right to work have been lifted and from late 2010 Palestinian refugees must no longer pay for the work permit. Realising that making them working legally rather than illegally would economically benefit the country, the Lebanese government is discussing ways to grant the Palestinians the right to work while discouraging their naturalisation.

The strength and tenacity of the Palestinians is not only seen through their hard work. Despite the very limited opportunities to them, they do not give up their dreams and remain positive about their future. Despite the difficult economic and social condition and the limited job opportunities, they do not surrender their education or that of their children. As Abdallah, a Palestinian in his 70s, affirms:

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[21] Interview with Lebanese official who wishes to remain anonymous. Beirut, 28 November 2008. Interview conducted in English.

> [...] despite the siege and the miserable life we had, my son graduated from the university, he is studying computer sciences… My daughter also graduated… Despite everything, we like to be educated…. The education is a base for everything in human beings' life.[22]

While some like to spend their free time writing poems or lyrics for songs, Hakim, a twenty year old Palestinian, works hard to achieve what he desires as he studies and works full time. As he says, if he ever needs more money, he freezes his studies, works more and goes back to the university as his dream is that of becoming an interior designer.[23]

Notwithstanding their difficult situation, happiness could still be seen in their eyes. Joy and excitement could be felt in their account of their future life: getting married, remaining in the camp, furnishing the house, find a job for which they so hard worked and studied too. Despite the terrible conditions in which they live, optimism and faith are still so strongly manifested in their everyday smallest gestures that lead them to never give up.

Concluding remarks

Although sovereign power is the one that produces bare life, power may also be approached in a different way. If we abandon a juridical and legal approach to power (typical of Agamben's reflection and reading), we may realise that power is not distributed at the global level and institutionally only (as discussed in the previous chapter), but is a relation that encompasses different points and actors. Life may be bare life (stripped of the juridical and political value by the sovereign), but this does not imply that it is deprived of agency too.

In this chapter, I have demonstrated that although refugees may be stripped of protection and rights, still they can develop 'incidental resistances' (Scott, 1985) and 'quiet encroachments' (Bayat, 2010). By developing different strategies of self-help and survival, refugees have managed to challenge the sovereign's decision by re-installing power relations. This was particularly significant and blatant in the examples of the re-selling of

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[22] Abdallah, Shatila, 17 November 2008. Interview conducted in Arabic.
[23] Insights from interview with Hakim, Shatila, 17 December 2008. Interview conducted in English.

the humanitarian rations and the constructions of concrete walls within the tents. In these cases, it was shown how materialities that are conceived and designed with a certain purpose (for instance the rations), are utilised by the refugees in other ways. Rather than leading to big structural changes and liberation, this incidental resistance helps them survive and cope with everyday difficulties. As the refugees turn the ration into profits, so they shift the roles of the refugee camps. From a biopolitical space that aims at the confinement, control and exclusion of the Palestinians, the camp is transformed into a possibility of resistance as challenges to sovereign decisions are produced in the very space of exception. Born to isolate and separate them from host society, it is transformed into a space where it is possible to keep alive memories, traditions and stories that sovereign forces such as the Lebanese states and the international community would want Palestinians to forget about. As the marginalisation – social, economical and spatial – facilitates the strengthening of their cohesion and sense of identity, small and individual acts of incidental resistance are followed by more collective and organised agency. Despite the negation of the political and juridical value of their life, the Palestinians show the capacity of political organisation and struggle.

By showing how power is dispersed and the way it circulates, the chapter also demonstrated how the Lebanese state is not the only responsible for their exclusion and how host society may play a significant role too. In the 1960s and 1970s especially, the Palestinians and the Lebanese developed an alliance that embodied the notion of the 'whatever being'. The opposition to the Lebanese state's policies and decisions was in fact a heterogeneous movement that did not claim any identity. This movement binding together the refugee community and host society, openly confronted the Lebanese state and its army. The state, no longer able to draw lines and boundaries dividing forms of life, was impotent and forced to comply to the civil society's desires and moods. Yet, as much as this alliance was fundamental for the liberation of the camps and the Palestinians, the break-up of this precious bond meant for the Palestinians the dramatisation of their exclusion. As Lebanese public is united with its politics on the blame of the Palestinians for the destruction of Lebanon during the civil war, today the refugees are experiencing a legal discrimination on which the Lebanese seem to agree too.

Despite this exclusion and discrimination, the Palestinians keep showing a spirit of adaptation. As they develop strategies to survive and transgress the law, they demonstrate how even after the sovereign's decision there is still a chance to resist. Even if the refugees are included in Lebanon by virtue of their exclusion and exploitation (see for example the

right to work), countless small daily actions keep them going through the 'quiet encroachment'. A politics of practices, rather than protest, the Palestinian quiet encroachment directly acts on their zones of exclusions performing the rights they claim by working without permits and continuing practising their professions even though legally prohibited.

5- The refugee camp:

From a Lebanese sovereign exception to a Palestinian territory?

If I was not a Palestinian when I left Haifa as a child, I am one now. Living in Beirut as a stateless person for most of my growing up years, many of them in a refugee camp, I did not feel I was living among my 'Arab brothers." I did not feel I was an Arab, a Lebanese, or, as some wretchedly pious writers claimed, a "southern Syrian." I was a Palestinian. And that meant I was an outsider, an alien, a refugee and a burden.

(Turki, 1972: 8)

The ambiguity of exception appears when these spaces intrinsically take on the aspects of self-governing enclaves, and they acquire the potential to challenge the absolute authority of the state.

(Weizman, 2007: 20)

The purpose of this chapter is to investigate the establishment of the Palestinian camps in Lebanon and their evolution as spaces of exception. While in Chapter 3 I have discussed the production of new subjectivities by virtue of classifications, the provision of humanitarian aid and the issue of particular legal measures, this chapter focuses on the spatialisation of techniques of power. The constitution of the Palestinian spaces in Lebanon was a long process that initiated in 1948 and ended only in the mid-1950s with the establishment of sixteen official camps, which hosted the majority of the Palestinians arriving in Lebanon. Today, however, the number of official refugee camps in the country amount to twelve only. The camps of Tell El-Zaatar, Jisr El-Basha and Nabatieh were destroyed in the 1970s during the civil war or during Israeli retaliatory attacks and have never been reconstructed. From the camp of Gouraud in Baalbek (Bekaa Valley), UNRWA withdrew its operation during the 1950s or early 1960s and refugees were transferred elsewhere (FMO, Undated b). It is also noteworthy reporting that the twelve official camps are not the only temporary settlement solutions for the Palestinians in exile. A significant

number of unofficial Palestinian gatherings never recognised by the Lebanese authorities and UNRWA punctuate the Lebanese landscape. Though it would be interesting to explore the history and evolution of these sites and communities, this investigation is beyond the scope of the present research and the chapter focuses on the officially recognised camps in order to uncover the different struggles for control converging in these areas.

At the beginning of the Palestinian displacement, refugee camps were instrumental for two main reasons. Behind the pretext of gathering the refugees in camps to better provide humanitarian assistance and relief, these spaces became essential to the Lebanese authorities as the camp was transformed from a space of humanitarian aid into a technology of containment and surveillance. Aimed at keeping the Palestinian refugees far from Lebanese society and at preventing their integration, the concentration of the refugees also allowed for the constant surveillance to take place through police and intelligence services offices placed in the camps or in their proximity. For at least the first twenty years of the Palestinian displacement, the refugees' movements and activities were closely monitored. But beyond a security issue, refugee camps also were, and still are, the materialisation of the temporariness to which the Palestinians have been confined, the suspension of a solution to their predicament as well as a clear sign of their marginalisation in Lebanon. Despite their prolonged existence, the camps are still perceived today as the embodiment of frozen and suspended rights as if the hands of time have stopped running since 1948.

If at the beginning surveillance of the camp was a prerogative of the Lebanese authorities and a necessity to defend the political balances in the country, today the camps are described as islands of insecurity challenging the Lebanese order and sovereignty. As the Lebanese authorities withdrew from the refugees' spaces in 1969, the camps are autonomous spaces governed by the Palestinians. Extraterritorial islands conceptually disenfranchised from Lebanese political and juridical order, they posit questions on territorial continuity and integrity, but also serious questions related to the security of the country and the very meaning of sovereignty.

Drawing on studies investigating the Palestinian condition in Lebanon as well as on primary sources such as encounters and interviews from fieldwork carried out in Beirut, the chapter aims to uncover the politico-juridical structure of the refugee camps as well as the forms of power and struggles converging in these sites. While looking at the development of the refugees' spaces with a particular focus on Shatila, the chapter is divided into three main sections. As the Palestinian presence in Lebanon has been marked

by very distinctive periods in which at times they were oppressed and at others they have been perceived as the oppressors in a country that did not belong to them, the discussion proceeds chronologically in order to highlight particular phases of the history of the camps. The first part of the chapter looks at the refugees' arrival in the country, the establishment of the camps and the state's response to the massive Palestinian presence that might have constituted a political and demographic danger for the delicate balance of the country. In this section, I explore the Lebanese authorities' political and securitarian concerns, as well as the repressive measures used in the camp and towards the Palestinian population. Measures of containment and oppression applied to the Palestinians and their camps seem to resonate with Agamben's (1995a, 1998) reflection on the exception, sovereign power and bare life as the refugees find themselves at the mercy of the Lebanese authorities' decisions and arbitrariness. While the refugee camp embodies the space of exception in as much as it becomes the place in which everything becomes possible, this part also explores the rise of an embryonic resistance. Consolidated also through the support of the Lebanese (see Chapter 4), in 1969 the Palestinian Resistance Movement (PRM) managed to liberate the camps from the grip of the Lebanese police and intelligence services. The signature of the Cairo Agreement (1969) is crucial as it formally handed the security and management of the camps over to the Palestinian factions and allowed the resistance to launch the liberation struggle from Lebanon soil.

While the first part of the chapter focuses on the camps as controlled and surveilled spaces, the second section shows how the camps shifted from humanitarian and disciplinary spaces into spaces of autonomy. As laboratories of Palestinian civil and military administration and spaces in which to experiment with self-governing practices, the camps provided a free platform from which to continue their resistance activities. Yet, this period of peaceful autonomy did not last long. With the start of the Lebanese civil war (1976) in fact, freedom and emancipation gave way to horrors and violence as the Palestinian camps became the stage of appalling massacres and sieges. As the civil war transformed the struggle for the liberation of Palestine into a struggle for survival in Lebanon, both the camps and Palestinian life were treated as *sacer*, destroyable and killable with impunity.

The third part focuses on the camps from the end of the civil conflict onwards. It is shown how, despite the representation of the camps as spaces hosting outlaws, criminals and terrorists, the Lebanese authorities have refused to take control over these spaces. In spite of the abrogation of the Cairo Agreement (1987) that since 1969 had prevented the

Lebanese from entering and controlling the camps, surveillance seems not to constitute a concern. While for a few camps surveillance is applied from the outside only by means of checkpoints, I demonstrate how disciplinary techniques of panoptican surveillance and control give way to security modes that let things be and happen. From a Lebanese and disciplinary space of exception as it was until 1969, the camp seems to be turning into a Palestinian sovereign territory that continuously challenges the state security. Yet, this apparent freedom and autonomy can be crushed in any moment showing how the Lebanese authorities, despite their apparent withdrawal, could still be considered the ultimate sovereign and the master of the decision.

Lastly, the chapter investigates the camps as autonomous places. It is shown how the exception and disengagement of the state give rise to a multiplicity of what Judith Butler (2004) calls 'petty sovereigns' and struggles over power and control. As the Palestinians may be reduced to bare life by their own representatives, a more positive side of the exception is revealed. While escaping the control of the state, the camp and its inhabitants are capable of developing self-governance modes and institutions. Moreover, as the camp was once established to confine and oppress the undesired, from a space of violence and repression it turns into a space of possibility. As everything for the Palestinians is excepted outside, within the very camp's boundaries refugees can reproduce normalcy and ordinary lives in their incessant struggle for survival.

Establishing the refugee camps 1948-1969:
From subjugation and violence to freedom

The birth of the camps: Between control and resistance

With the birth of the state of Israel and the subsequent outbreak of the first Arab-Israeli conflict, among the 750,000 Palestinians that fled their homes and villages more than 100,000 found refuge in Lebanon. Some of them crossed the frontier by foot, by car or other rudimental means of transportation, while others reached the main ports of Lebanon by boat.[1] Whereas the middle and urban Palestinian classes had estate in Lebanon and managed to resettle in cities renting flats and integrating themselves into Lebanese society (on this see also Chapter 6), for the majority of the Palestinians that came to

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[1] On the 1948 displacement, see also Refugee Interviews, 1988.

The refugee camp

Lebanon things were different. Partly forced by the Lebanese authorities and partly forced by circumstances, the Palestinians who lost their homes and means of livelihood during the Nakba had to relocate in the newly established refugee camps where humanitarian organisations were coordinating the relief and assistance.

However, while the establishment of the camps was justified by the need to gather the refugees to better provide general services and assistance, the setting up of temporary facilities was also instrumental to the Lebanese authorities. Once it was clear that the presence of the Palestinian refugees was turning into a more prolonged and indefinite temporariness, the concerns of the Lebanese authorities and their responses were soon revealed. The Palestinian displaced equalled ten percent of the total Lebanese population and could not have been sustained for long without major political and economic consequences. The presence of mostly Sunni Muslim refugees who might have ended up being naturalised in Lebanon was considered a serious threat for the delicate political balance in the country. Established as humanitarian support and a temporary solution, refugee camps turned into an effective technology of containment and surveillance. As a spatial device aiming at separating the refugee population from the host society, the camp became a technology that allowed the easy management of the Palestinian life and the strict control of the refugees' movements and potentially dangerous activities. Since '[t]here is no care without control', refugees were turned from vulnerable lives into public order preoccupations (Agier, 2011: 4).

Forced transfers of the Palestinians to designated spaces took place soon after the refugees arrived in Lebanon. This was the case of Salma, for instance, a Palestinian woman in her 70s that I met in Shatila. Following the death of her father, killed by a bomb while shutting down his shop in Yaffa, she fled Palestine with her family in 1948 from the port of the city. Arriving at the port of Beirut, Salma and her family spent the first two weeks of their stay in Lebanon in the quarter of Qarantina mainly inhabited by Christian families of Armenian origin in the eastern part of the capital. While she still remembers with gratitude the help that they received from the Lebanese, who provided them with beds and food, she tells how she was later transferred to the city of Saida where new temporary facilities had been set up for the Palestinians:

The refugee camp

> The Lebanese scouts welcomed us, God bless them… they offered
>
> us food and drink… we were starving. We stayed fifteen days, then
>
> the buses came and they took us to Mieh Mieh in Saida.[2]

With no other choice than to get on the bus and be transferred, this was also the destiny of many other Palestinians. In addition to this, it seems that another practice was that of 'collecting' the Palestinians in the south, 'loading' them on buses and trains and taking them to other destinations such as Latakia in Syria where a refugee camp was established to accommodate the Palestinians transferred from Lebanon.[3] Although not all Palestinians experienced the same forced transfers, the exercise of power and the sovereign decision over the refugees' lives and spaces could be arbitrary and sudden. Without any notice as part of the logic of emergency, Palestinians could be loaded to busses and trains with no possibility to decide where to live or settle temporarily.

Despite the fact that refugees' forced transfer may not have been the norm (as I discuss below), sooner or later, forced or voluntarily, the Palestinians had to move to the refugee camps. Victims of a widespread institutional discrimination through decrees or orders that prevented them from legally working, using national health and educational services, the Palestinians were unable to provide for their families. As Peteet (2005: 108-109) suggests, the discrimination to which they were subjected and the exhaustion of their savings led many to move to the camps were rations, free health care and education were offered by UNRWA. The exclusion of the Palestinian refugees from the utilisation of public services and the chance to work corresponded to their inclusion in the domain of sovereign power as their lives in the camps were controlled and managed by the Lebanese authorities. As the materialisation of Agamben's inclusive exclusion, their being 'excepted' did not stand for a simple exclusion. As Agamben (1998: 18) argues, 'the exception is truly, according to its etymological root, *taken outside* (*ex-capere*), and not simply excluded' (emphasis in the orginal). As the Palestinians were stripped of their rights outside the refugee camps, the management of their life – the care coupled with the control – were performed within the camp boundaries where the normal juridical order was no longer applied (I return to this point later).

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[2] Salma, Shatila, 20 December 2008. Interview conducted in Arabic.
[3] Insights from interview with Palestinian scholar and legal expert Souheil El-Natour, Mar Elias, 24 December 2008. Interview conducted in English.

The refugee camp

In order to concentrate and enclose the refugees to better control them, by the mid-1950s sixteen official refugee camps were set up and recognised by the Lebanese authorities and UNRWA that began operating in Lebanon in 1950 providing assistance and services in the recognised camps (see Figure 2, map of official camps then and now, and some informal gatherings).[4]
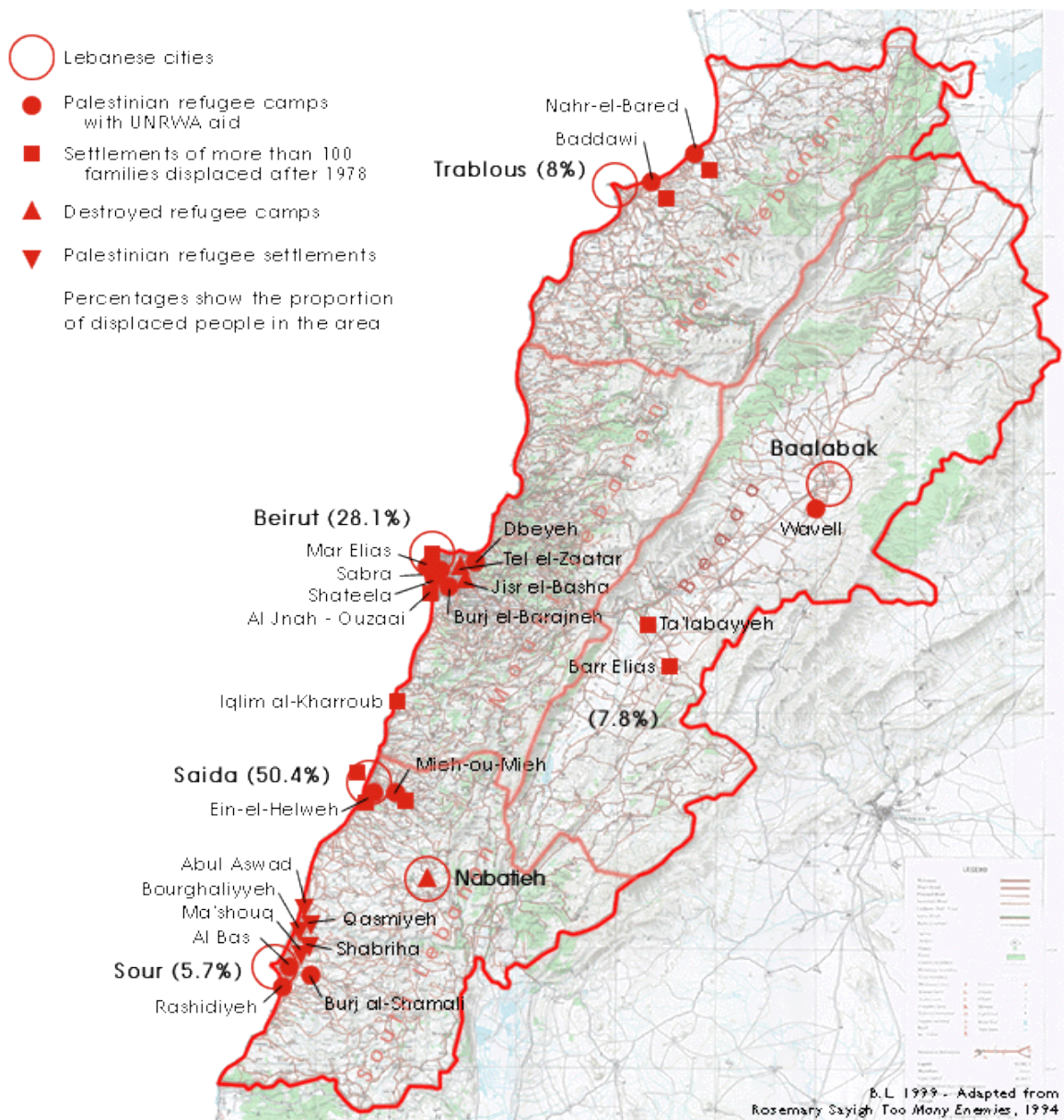
Figure 2: Distribution of the refugee camps, Al-Mashriq, at
http://almashriq.hiof.no/lebanon/300/300/307/pal-camps/lebanon-refugee-camps.gif (last accessed, August 2007).

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[4] This map does not show the camp of Gouraud in the Bekaa Valley, mentioned in the introduction of the chapter. UNRWA withdrew its services from this camp perhaps during the 1950s or early 1960s. This camp seems not to have been mapped and no further information about its establishment or closure is available.

The refugee camp

Though the Lebanese government would have preferred establishing the camps in isolated areas so as to avoid the refugees' integration and the spoiling of urban and natural landscapes, the locations of the camps are the results of different factors. The siting of the camps was in fact the consequence of different circumstances – such as the availability of land, the presence of already existing and abandoned refugee installations or military barracks – and the agency of different actors including the refugees themselves (Sayigh, 1988: 19). Donated land and the involvement of charity and religious organisations determined the location of refugee camps of the Metn region east of Beirut – Tell El-Zaatar, Dbayeh, Jisr El-Basha – and the camp of Mar Elias within Beirut southern municipal boundaries (Sfeir, 2008: 231-241). As some Christian churches and charities offered their services and assistance to Christian Palestinians, the 'confessionalisation' of the refugee body was achieved through the establishment of mostly, although not exclusively, Catholic and Greek-Orthodox refugee camps whose siting depended exclusively by the availability of donated land and these organisations' decision.

Guided by security concerns, the Lebanese authorities would have welcomed the siting of the camps in remote areas and far from the Lebanese-Israeli border as to prevent any potential clash with the Israeli army. Yet, their desire and success in so doing materialised only in the cases of the Nahr El-Bared camp, sixteen kilometres far from Tripoli in northern Lebanon, and the quite isolated camp of Wavell in the Bekaa Valley. But if the establishment of these two camps in remote rural areas and far from urban centres managed to keep the refugee population separated from host society and far from the border in this way preventing any clash with the Israeli army, this success was not achieved as regards the southern Lebanese region or other urban centres. Pre-existing facilities such as former Armenian refugee camps in Tyre or abandoned French military posts in the South prevented the Lebanese authorities from imposing their model of temporary settlement. Camps in the South in fact represented the first destinations for those crossing the Lebanese-Israeli border on foot or by car and, perhaps because of the ever increasing influx, forced transfers here were not achieved.

In addition to this, the Lebanese economy and the refugees' needs dictated the locations of most of the camps as well as informal gatherings. As the camps of the South and the Bekaa Valley provided cheap labour to the Lebanese landlords and seasonal job opportunities for the refugees, camps closer to urban centres such as Beirut offered the opportunity to work in the industrial and construction sectors (Doraï, 2006).

The refugee camp

Yet, despite the marginalisation and difficult conditions, the Palestinians' spirit of initiative was remarkable and some even managed to chose and secure the land for the establishment of the camps. The case of Burj El-Barajneh and Shatila camps (today metropolitan Beirut) and the story of their establishment reveal the refugees' determination to reject the bare life discourse to which refugees are mostly and usually confined to. Situated today in the southern periphery of the capital, the establishment of the camp of Burj El-Barajneh was the result of the Palestinians' own efforts in deciding where to reside and in shaping their spaces. According to Gorokhoff (1984), the refugees that at the end of the 1940s and beginning of the 1950s settled in the area where the camp is located were supposed to be transferred to Aleppo (Syria). Firmly opposing the Lebanese government's plans, the refugees decided to stay and they themselves secured the land on which the camp was later set up through direct negotiations with the municipality of Burj El-Barajneh, from which the camp took the name. The case of Shatila presents some similarities to that of Burj El-Barajneh camp. Today in the southern suburbs of the capital, the birth of Shatila camp and its development are the results of refugees' own initiative and ability. The establishment of the camp was such a remarkable achievement for the refugees that still today the Palestinians feel proud while they narrate the history of the birth of the camp and how the camp kept on surviving potential demolition plans. Ahmad, for example, is a Palestinian in his 80s who after wandering in some villages of South Lebanon for a while in 1948, then moved to Beirut and is one of the first refugees that settled in the area where the camp was established. In his words:

> I want to tell you how we reached Shatila.. Majd El-Kroum, Rmeish, Bint Jbeil, Jwaiya, BNazouriye, Saida, Adloun… In Adloun I worked in the field, I didn't like this kind of job, so we moved to Beirut. There were some refugees in the park. We asked about the owner of this empty spot, his name was Abdallah Saleh, but the person in charge was Basha Shatila […] People staying in the park, like Abu Kamal and Abu Zaarour, went to him and asked for his permission. They complained about their bad situation. He told them that the owners of the land are Saad's family, they live in

The refugee camp

> Brazil… But since he is the responsible, and the representative of
> the landlord, he allowed them to move there.[5]

The land was therefore secured by the same refugees that decided where to settle having found an empty spot of land not far from Beirut. The camp was officially recognised only in 1949 by the International Committee of the Red Cross that provided the refugees with tents and basic services later guaranteed by UNRWA which started its operations in 1950.

The examples of Burj El-Barajneh and Shatila are clear instances of the Palestinians' ability in settling down and dealing with any potential legal impediment or eviction without the help of UNRWA or any other authority. Despite a biopower that positions them as lives to be saved – that of humanitarian organisations – and a sovereign power excluding them from society as 'abnormals' unable to fit in the nation-state system – that of the Lebanese government – the cases of Shatila and Burj El-Barajneh show how refugees are not to be understood as passive objects of various management techniques. Further evidence of their coping abilities and agency was also shown through the refugees' determination in guaranteeing the camp's survival. Multiple attempts of eviction to make space for luxurious residences were resisted by the Palestinians through the increase of the camp population. To prevent the dissolution of the camp and the eviction of its inhabitants, the founder of Shatila travelled extensively across Lebanon to gather refugees coming from the same Palestinian village – Majd El-Kroum – or nearby areas in Palestine (Sayigh, 1994: 35-38). As Beirut could offer more job opportunities and because of relatives already living in the camp, many moved to Shatila. As Hadi, a Palestinian man I met in Shatila, explains, his family moved from the camp of Mieh Mieh in Saida to Shatila in 1952:

> I asked [my parents] why they leaved Mieh Mieh, they told me that
> most of the people from Yaffa were here in Beirut.. so we preferred
> to be close to the family. We found an empty spot of land and put

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[5] Ahmad, Shatila, 26 December 2008. Interview conducted in Arabic.

> two tents. My uncle still lives in the house behind ours.. they came
> here in 1952 and we are here ever since.[6]

Contesting a literature that addresses the refugees as passive beings incapable of agency and at the mercy of state authorities, Hadi's testimony shows how forced transfers were not always imposed or achieved, and that refugees once in the camp could freely choose where to plant their tents and settle. This, in particular, facilitated the reunification of families and village communities so as to reproduce the pre-Nakba life in exile (Khalili, 2004a: 11; Peteet, 2005; Sayigh, 1994; and for the case of Burj El-Barajneh see also Roberts, 1999).

Palestinians' effort in securing the land for the camp was remarkable. Presenting facts on the ground, not much scope for decision was left to the Lebanese authorities and the Committee of the Red Cross that before the start of UNRWA operations had to recognise the camp (Sayigh, 1994: 36). Despite this remarkable achievement, however, the status of the land on which some camps, including Shatila, was established is a quite sensitive matter in Lebanon and remains uncertain. While the literature on the Palestinian refugee camps in Lebanon describes UNRWA as paying the rent for the land directly to the owners or through the Lebanese authorities (among others see Gorokhoff, 1984; Halabi, 2004), it seems that no rent is paid and that the usufruct of the land is guaranteed by agreements between the government and the UN agency or by some administrative order or decree.

In the case of Shatila in particular, consent was given to the refugees from the administrator of the property but not by the owner himself. According to UNRWA's (1961: 29) documents, the owner managed to obtain an eviction order from the court but the court's decision has never been implemented. Apart from cases in which the land has been actually donated to the refugees to settle temporarily, it seems that for most of the Palestinian camps in Lebanon there is a *de facto* expropriation. As in the words of an UNRWA source:

> All this issue of the land is very complicated and varies from place
> to place. There is a decision taken by the Lebanese authorities to
> make available for UNRWA a whole series of lands that, according

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[6] Hadi, Shatila, 23 December 2008. Interview conducted in Arabic.

> to me, are *de facto* expropriated. The only situations which are quite complicated are represented by the camp of Dbayeh for which we have a sort of leasing contract according to which we have been paying almost nothing since I don't know how many years; and the other one is Beddawi that was turned into a conflict between the owners of the land, the government and us [UNRWA] and has yet to be solved and it will be the object of an arbitration but I have no idea when this issue will be solved. […] It is not a real decision of expropriation. It's a *de facto* expropriation and that means that this simply happened.[7]

When asked whom the owner of the land may sue, the UNRWA source explains that UNRWA is not involved in these legal procedures. According to her, the Lebanese government issued a decree in the 1970s that guaranteed UNRWA the use of the land on which to establish the refugee camps. Following her words, the responsibility lies on the Lebanese state and government that committed with UNRWA and the Palestinians in making available the land for the refugee camps.

Unfortunately obtaining copies of any documentations that might shed some light on the status of the land on which the camps were established was not possible and, most of all, was refused elsewhere.[8] Either this documentation does not exist or the government does not wish to publicise it. In the first case, this would mean that uncertainty over the status of the land has become the rule and perhaps this ambiguity would leave the Lebanese government the option to eliminate the camps one day with no legal consequences. But according to the UNRWA source, this may not be the case as some rights have been acquired by the Palestinians through the prolonged occupation of the land. This means that if new development projects are to be pursued on the land that has been assigned to the recognised refugee camp, the company responsible for the project would have to compensate the refugees or, in cooperation with the Lebanese government, should find alternative accommodation for the displaced families. If instead this documentation regarding the status of the land on which the camps have been established exists, the hiding

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[7] UNRWA source, Beirut, 22 December 2008.
[8] Having asked stakeholders for a copy of any agreements or any decrees granting UNRWA and the refugees the right to operate and live in the designated areas, obtaining such information or clear explanations on the juridical basis of the establishment of refugee camps was not successful.

of these decrees or agreements remains a dilemma. Perhaps afraid that publicising the documents would further formalise the camps and the Palestinian presence in the country – most probably leading to the refugees' naturalisation – the Lebanese authorities prefer to keep this piece of information hidden in this way leaving the option of eviction always open and possible. This would probably have the same consequence of the first case – the documents might not exist – with the only difference being that if anything was signed it was done with the sole aim of better administering and managing the camps. While the real reasons for such ambiguity remain obscure, uncertainty over the camp is kept in place. In both cases the Lebanese government wants to hold the right to make the ultimate decision and dispose of these spaces as it wishes leaving the logic of emergency permanently activated.

From the repression to the liberation of the camps

If the issue of the land on which the camps have been established is not clear, definitely clear and distinct were the roles of UNRWA and the Lebanese authorities in the management of the camps. A meticulous division of roles alternated techniques of biopower and sovereign power in the space of the camp. As the Lebanese government did not want to take any responsibility as regards the humanitarian assistance of the Palestinians, UNRWA took care of the camps, their maintenance, and the provision of rations and services such as schools and clinics. Moreover, in accordance with the Lebanese authorities, in the first years of displacement UNRWA supplied tents to newcomers so as to stress the temporariness of the refugees' condition. This was not only welcomed by the Lebanese authorities, but the use of tents was also preferred by the refugees themselves as they still hoped in the implementation of Resolution 194 that sanctioned their right of return to their homes and villages in Palestine. Nonetheless, cold winters and bad sanitary conditions could not be tolerated for long. While improvement of refugees' shelters was needed, solid material that would have given the impression of permanence was forbidden. For this reason, the Palestinians had to rely on wood, and sheets of zinc and aluminium only provided by UNRWA. The use of these provisional solutions, in fact, still reflected the temporariness of the refugees' presence in Lebanon. As any improvement had to be functional to the refugees' mere survival, the use of zinc plates

was forbidden for the perimeter of the tent, and plates could only be placed underneath the tent to isolate the interior from the humid ground.[9]

While UNRWA took care of the humanitarian assistance, the Lebanese authorities were more than willing to take full responsibility for the security aspects pertaining to the refugees' presence within and beyond the camp boundaries. As regards Shatila, the isolation of the camp from the centre of Beirut and other inhabited areas at the end of the 1940s and for the first years of the 1950s guaranteed the separation of the Palestinians from Lebanese society, and this isolation also facilitated the control of the refugees' activities and movements.[10] Although the camp could be accessed from multiple points as no fence or wall was built around it, a police and Deuxième Bureau (Lebanese intelligence service) offices, acting also as checkpoints, were placed inside the camp: the first next to the public toilets; the second next to the UNRWA office of the camp and in the proximity of one of the main entrances.[11] Particularly after the brief Lebanese civil war of 1958, controls on the refugees' movements and activities became far stricter (see Chapter 3). To enter and exit the camp, the inhabitants had to put their names on a list in which they had to declare the reasons of their leaving and entering the camp. More specifically, if they had to visit relatives living in the southern areas of the country, they had to obtain prior permission to travel, and if relatives had to come to visit in the camp, permission had to be obtained for those who did not reside there (see also Peteet, 2005: 110-111).[12]

While the main task of the police was that of preventing the expansion of the camp and improvement of the shelters through the use of solid material, the intelligence services' duty was that of closely following the refugees' movements and avoiding the formation of any political organisation or activity. In particular, after the 1958 conflict, martial law was declared in the refugee camps and also on the refugee body (Ajial Center, 2001; Hanafi, 2010a: 3). Stripped of their rights and dignity, the Palestinians were the objects of any form of abuse and violence as if the defence of the Lebanese state and its *status quo* passed through the refugees' own body. Although any measure was justified by the need to maintain the public order – as materialisation of the state of exception when everything becomes possible – Lebanese policemen and officers abused of their position of power

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[9] Insights from interview with Yusuf, Shatila, 18 November 2008. Interview conducted in Arabic.

[10] Insights from interview with Souheil El-Natour, Mar Elias, 24 December. Interview conducted in English.

[11] Insights from interview with Mahmoud, Shatila, 14 November 2008. Interview conducted in Arabic.

[12] Insights from interview with Abdallah, Shatila, 17 November 2008. Interview conducted in Arabic.

even in the absence of a clear motivation or accusation. The Palestinians usually remember these episodes and that time with great anxiety. If one person was simply suspected of being part of a political party she could be arrested and tortured. To prevent any form of political organisation or meeting, any festival or ceremony, even weddings, were prohibited unless previous permission was obtained through the Lebanese authorities or unless Lebanese army officers could supervise the event (Ajial Center, Undated; Faris 1981; El-Natour, 1993). The Palestinians were also forbidden from introducing in the camp any 'sensitive' material such as leaflets, books and newspapers, and listening to the radio, especially 'Radio Cairo', was classified as a threat to the Lebanese security (Sayigh, 1994, 2007).

The main targets, although not the only ones, were political party members or those suspected of taking part to any political activity. As in the words of one refugee interviewed by Sayigh (1994: 69):

> Membership in the ANM [Arab Nationalist Movement] meant that I had political activities. This led to my being followed by the Deuxième Bureau. I was arrested many times. There was a law of Permanent Emergency under which the police had the right to break into our homes at any time to search.
> They used to come at night to listen under my window, to see who was with me. Once when my son died and people came to condole [sic] me, they broke into my house because they thought I was holding a meeting…
> They tried many other kinds of pressure besides arrests and beatings. They contacted my friends and told them not to be seen with me – "he's suspect". For a period no one dared to say "marhaba" (hallo) to me, no one visited me. They found out where I was working and told my boss to dismiss me.

According to another refugee interviewed by Sayigh (2007: 134), the policemen and intelligence services officers arbitrarily used violence or fabricated stories:

The refugee camp

> […] There were two stations near the camp, one for the ordinary police, the other the D.B. [Deuxième Bureau] – the two used to compete with each other to see which could arrest the largest number of people, so as to report this to their chiefs. Almost every day, and sometimes at night, they'd come to take people away. Once they came to our house to arrest my brother, and because he wasn't there they took me in his place.

The abuse of power seemed to constitute the ordinary activity of the authorities in the camp and arbitrariness was the rule. But as Agamben (1995a, 1998, 2005a) reminds us, once the state of emergency is declared, everyone becomes potentially *homo sacer*. Violence and abuse are no longer aimed at the defence of the state, but are justified by the pure exercise of power on defenceless beings. To some extent and with due precaution in drawing the parallel, it seems that the power exercised on the Palestinian life and refugee camps during this particular period of history somehow resembles the one exercised in the Nazi concentration camps. Whereas power in the concentration camps after the Final Solution aimed at the systematic elimination of the biological threat, in the Palestinian camps of this period there was no such planned action. However, the ways in which power operated was rather similar as in both cases, authorities' decisions were arbitrary and sudden as in the case of forced transfers in 1948 discussed above.

From the juridical point of view, parallels can be drawn as the declaration of the state of emergency paved the way to multiple forms of violence and abuse. As the space of concentration camps was placed outside the normal juridical order, so did the space of refugee camp and Palestinian life itself as the declaration of martial law led to the suspension of law and normal rules of conduct and allowed for the elimination of all political adversaries. While in normal times one person is deemed innocent until proved guilty, the opposite occurs in the state of emergency. Terror was exercised in the camps. Indefinite detentions in the army barracks or in the General Security facilities were not unusual, and the use of torture to gain information on any sort of activity undertaken by the camp inhabitants was common (Sayigh, 1994: 69). New rules were continuously made and remade in the moment of the decision and the policeman or the secret services officer could apply any means to repress any form of political or non-political activity. Arbitrariness and improvisations could hit each and everyone even for no particular reason.

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The 'offences' for which Palestinians could have been fined, arrested or beaten up in fact ranged from the suspicion of, or certainty about, their involvement in political activities to the construction or improvement of their house without permission. Throwing water on the street to avoid the dust rising or to dispose of the waste of washing and cleaning in the absence of a drainage and sewage system could be punished or fined. When asked how the police and the authorities behaved during this period in the camps, Hadi explains: 'If a woman poured some water in front of the tent, they would fine her and insult her husband'.[13] The constant humiliation was the rule. On more than one occasion members of the secret services entered the houses and began beating up the head of the family in front of his wife and children (Ajial Center, Undated: 10). Curfew was imposed on the inhabitants of the camp after 8pm so as to further restrict their movements and activities (Sayigh, 1994: 71).

If controls of the refugees' activities were strengthened inside the camps through the recruitment of spies among the inhabitants, security was enhanced outside the camp boundaries through the establishment of checkpoints on the main roads. This latter strategy was particularly useful to monitor and discourage the Palestinians' movements so as to isolate the different refugee camps from one another and avoid collective organisation. If refugees were caught outside the camp with no prior authorisation to travel, they were harassed and imprisoned.[14]

However, as the Palestinian Resistance Movement (PRM) was increasingly attracting attention in the Arab world and gaining support, especially after the 1967 defeat, despite the harsh repression, undercover political activities were taking shape in the camps. As Jaber Suleiman affirms:

> What I'm trying to say is that even under the pressure of the
> Deuxième Bureau, Palestinian nationalism continued in many
> secret ways. Sometimes they participated to the Boy Scout

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[13] Hadi, Shatila, 23 December 2008. Interview conducted in Arabic.
[14] Insights from interviews with Mahmoud, Shatila, 14 November 2008 (conducted in Arabic) and Souheil El-Natour, Mar Elias, 24 December 2008 (conducted in English).

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> movement programme and under this cover they could do some
> activities.. you know..[15]

Not only was the political participation somehow kept alive in the backlines, but also the armed resistance was slowly arising. The first weapons were smuggled into the camps in the early 1960s and from the refugee camps of Beirut were directed to the South where military operations were undertaken to start the liberation of the homeland (Sayigh, 1994: 75). Fadi, a Lebanese who has always lived in the camp, joined the resistance in the Fatah ranks in the 1970s. He so vividly remembers the day in which the first guerrilla groups arrived in Shatila.

> I remember once, back in 1968, I was still at school […] There was
> a driver from UNRWA trying to enter […] There was a tanker
> truck full of water trying to get into the camp, and there were some
> mines on the ground. The truck blew up! In 1968-1969 there were
> some clashes with the Lebanese army. We ran away from school
> and on our way home.. we saw them: three or four feda'yeen
> [fighters]. They had their faces covered.. I saw them between the
> camp's allies.. inside the camp..[16]

As far as Fadi is concerned, this was the first resistance operation in Shatila camp. The feda'yeen's presence insinuated a new sense of empowerment in the camp inhabitants. It was the sign that the resistance was coming, not only to liberate Palestine, but to also liberate the camp from the abuse and oppression of the Lebanese authorities. Knowing that someone was fighting for them was an incentive for the population to riot and defend their rights. As Abbas Shiblak (1997: 263) suggests:

> Initially, the struggle to establish the PRM [Palestinian Resistance
> Movement] in Lebanon was a hard one; of those refugees who

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[15] Jaber Suleiman, Mar Elias, 2 January 2009. Interview conducted in English.
[16] Fadi, Sabra, 26 December 2008. Interview conducted in Arabic.

joined the PRM underground movement at an early stage of the struggle, several were assassinated by the Lebanese army. Once the Palestinian movement became more powerful, members became increasingly confident of showing their affiliation, and fida'yeen (fighters) of various political groups from Syria and other Arab countries came to Lebanon, there they were able to meet with relatives for the first time since 1948.

While at first glance it seems that the power exercised over the camps and on the Palestinians during the period of the Deuxième Bureau by the Lebanese authorities was the materialisation of the Agambenian camp and idea of sovereign power, an embryonic resistance was being born. Indeed, the rise of the resistance movement and the eviction of the Lebanese authorities from the Palestinian spaces in 1969 show how multiple forms of resistance, including the non-armed struggle, were still surviving in the camp in this way showing the impossibility to associate the life of the refugee to the bare life as described by Agamben. Although repression was hard and Palestinian life was deemed expendable by the Lebanese authorities operating in the camps or in the checkpoints of the main roads, forms of resistance blossomed in the very space of exception challenging the sovereign decision over the disposability of their lives. The liberation of the camps is the evidence that the power exercised by the Lebanese on these spaces was not absolute or all-encompassing for it failed in completely erasing the refugees' agency and their courage to react to humiliation. Although, as discussed in the previous chapter, a major role in the liberation of the camps was also played by the Lebanese's support of the Palestinian cause, the determination of the refugee community was fundamental for their emancipation and was emerging independently of the Lebanese society's solidarity.

It could also be argued that, as Turki's (1972) opening quote of the chapter suggests, the very containment strategies that along with discriminatory legislative measures and attitudes kept the refugees isolated gave the Palestinians a stronger sense of identity: a sense of being Arab but at the same time different; the sense of being excluded from Lebanese society and the realisation of their peculiar sense of belonging dramatised by their forced displacement in a foreign country, in a land and society that was not theirs. At the mercy of the Lebanese authorities for a long time, the camp population itself with the support of the resistance groups and the Lebanese, felt finally ready to react to the

continuous and arbitrary abuses of the authorities. The road to the liberation of Palestine had to pass through the liberation of the camps. The signature of the Cairo Agreement in November 1969 was ever closer.

The refugee camp:
From freedom and autonomy to space '*sacer*' (1969-1990)

Refugee camps as 'holes' and 'leaks' in Lebanese sovereignty (1969-1982)

In order to put an end to the ever increasing clashes occurring between the Lebanese army and the PRM, representatives of the Lebanese government and the PLO met in Cairo to agree on a new and more 'positive cooperation' that would guarantee both the Lebanese state security and the Palestinian interests. Signed on November 3, 1969, the Cairo Agreement regulated the relations between the Lebanese state, the PLO and the PRM, and guaranteed the autonomy of the refugee camps. The self-administration of the Palestinian spaces was regulated by the text of the accords that foresaw '[t]he establishment of local Palestinian committees in the camps to look after the affairs of the Palestinians residing within them, and this in cooperation with local authorities and under Lebanese sovereignty' (translation of the agreement in Shiblak, 1998: 25).

As Lebanese authorities left the camps, the Cairo Agreement, *de jure* and *de facto*, left the control and management of the camps in the hands of the Palestinians. While collaboration was supposed to take place between the Palestinian factions controlling the camps and the Lebanese authorities, in effect the agreement allowed for the creation of a space beyond the reach of the Lebanese that could no longer enter the camp unless escorted by the Palestinians. Full control of the camps and the refugees' life was handed over the PLO and the different political and military factions. As if the 'inclusive exclusion' broke down, refugee camps were no longer excluded from the normal juridical order to be included in the domain of power through the management of their life by the Lebanese state. The exclusion from the normal juridical order became dramatised as the Lebanese authorities no longer could act and decide on those spaces.

The freedom enjoyed after the Lebanese left the camp was also a sign that slowly the Palestinians were taking control of their own lives. Popular committees acted as sort of municipality as their task, still today, is that of administering the camps in all its aspects:

maintenance of the water and electricity supplies and roads; collection of garbage; resolution of internal disputes between neighbours or any litigation; and finally, but not less important, coordination with the Lebanese authorities and the security committee on matters concerning the camp security and the respect of Lebanon's sovereignty.

Although the camp population has never democratically elected its representatives and the members of committees, as the camp got rid of the Lebanese authorities a new sense of empowerment and hope emerged.[17] This could also be seen in the change of the camp's landscape and geography. Until 1969 quarters and areas of the camp were named after Palestinian lost villages, but with the arrival of the resistance the toponomy of the camp changed as areas and streets were named after political factions (Peteet, 2005; Sayigh, 1994). Moreover, prevented from utilising any solid material during the first two decades of the displacement, once the Lebanese police left the camps everyone began building in concrete. While in the 1960s the use of stones was gradually allowed for the walls of their shelters, until 1969 the use of any solid material was forbidden for the roof, which was still made of zinc so as to prevent the vertical expansion of the camps. In 1969, zinc in the roof was replaced by cement and the first two storey houses were being constructed to accommodate the natural growth of the population and new comers. The expansion of Shatila camp occurred both vertically and horizontally as Beirut attracted Palestinian refugees residing in other parts of the country as well as Lebanese and other foreign migrants hoping to find better opportunities in the capital (see also Chapter 6). As physically and socially the boundaries dividing the Palestinians from the rest of society began blurring, Palestinian-Lebanese relations and solidarity became stronger. While officially the Palestinians had control of the space of the camp only, their influence and decisions began 'leaking' out the camp boundaries as they encouraged other refugees to settle and build houses around Shatila. Although officially the Palestinians had control over the camp and could take decisions pertaining to the camp space only, their influence outside the boundaries show how even in the space formally controlled and administered by the state the exercise of sovereign power is not all encompassing. As if leakages, frames of Lebanese territory began escaping sovereign power's control allowing for the blossoming of Palestinian dominance outside the camps.

For the first time after two decades the Palestinians were now the 'owners' of their spaces. This had effects on the ways in which they perceived themselves. As Shiblak

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[17] As I discuss later, an experiment of democratic election has taken place in Shatila camp in 2005.

(1997: 268) points out, they could feel a new sense of empowerment, confidence and security. As the PLO and resistance groups took care of the camps and its security, refugees re-appropriated their spaces and lives. Free to join any political or military factions, to express their opinions and able to rely on PLO services, they began feeling self-sufficient and stronger as they were no longer dependent on the humanitarian aid, nor repressed by the Lebanese authorities. From a space of constriction, the camp turned into a space of hope and resistance. While taking part in the political life of their communities and camps, militantism was openly displayed and installed in the Palestinians a renewed trust in the return. People began carrying weapons openly and training was provided in the camps where even the youngest could learn the basics.[18] Palestinian factions began opening their own offices for the recruitment of new fighters and clinics in the camps. Fadi, a Lebanese who was a member of the Palestinian resistance, explains how each organisation – the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine (PFLP), Saiqa, Fatah and so on – had their own offices in Shatila, their own doctors and clinics that provided extra care for the camp population and for the fighters in case they were injured during training or resistance operations. In his words:

> I remember in the 1970s.. in front of our house there was a base for
> Saiqa called 'The medical'.. one of my friends got injured during
> the trainings, we took him to one of those first aid points.[19]

While the Palestinians were enjoying this freedom, this abandonment of control at the hands of the Lebanese authorities was raising some doubts in those convinced that the Cairo Agreement would have driven the country to destruction. The autonomy of the Palestinian camps, the freedom of movement of the resistance groups and operations for the liberation of Palestine were increasing the chances of a serious and violent confrontation with the Israeli army. However, as discussed in the previous chapter, Lebanese public opinion was yet not ready to see the Palestinian resistance crushed by the Lebanese army. Considering these feelings, the Lebanese government and army preferred to adopt a stance of 'waiting and seeing' and opted for closer cooperation with the PLO.

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[18] Zahra's (the translator) insights during our encounter with Fadi, a Lebanese interviewed in Sabra on 26 December 2008 (see note below). For an account of Zahra's role during the interviews see Chapter 2.

[19] Fadi, Sabra, 26 December 2008. Interview conducted in Arabic.

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Despite the fact that the PLO did not include all the factions part of the PRM and that actually some groups early in the 1970s gave rise to the Rejection Front opposing PLO's policies, it could still manage to control the 'loose splinters' of the movement. However difficult to keep the Palestinian movement united and disciplined, it was in the Lebanese authorities' best interest to maintain the *status quo* through a well pondered decision that balanced the pros and cons of an attack of the camps. The British Embassy of Beirut in a dispatch addressed to the Foreign Office of London reported:

> As regards reassessing government control of the camps, would such a policy in fact solve the problem? If one thought the matter out it obviously would not. The various undisciplined groups could not be controlled this way and government section to reimpose authority in the camps would merely alienate the moderate amongst the fedayeen who were at the moment co-operating well with the authorities. [...] The Armed Struggle Command, who were the Fatah military Police, were now co-operating fully. They had arrested and handed over to the police the followers of Dr. Sartawi who had recently murdered a Fatah man [...] and had also found and arrested the abductors of Lt. Ahmed Khalil Abdu [unclear typing] (A Jordanian officer, brother of the Jordan Chief of Staff, recently kidnapped in a Beirut hotel by fedayeen and subsequently found and released by Fatah). *It was very much easier for the government to exercise control of the camps through the PLO in this way and it was more effective. It acted as a safety valve if the fedayeen were encouraged to exert the government backed authority. This was considered government policy and in no sense a failure to act.* In his [Colonel Kana'an, new Deputy Chief of Staff operations of the Army] opinion it was a success, proved by the co-operation of the PLO and by the fact that fedayeen military training had now entirely ceased in Lebanon. (This is substantiated as far as

The refugee camp

> the camps are concerned by a senior UNRWA official) (emphasis
> added).[20]

According to this, it seems that the Lebanese government thought through the different options and decided that the best way to deal with the Palestinian resistance was a policy of *laisser-faire*. As if 'in the state' but 'not belonging to the state', refugee camps were excluded from Lebanese surveillance and by relying solely on the collaboration of the PLO, Lebanon was to some extent giving up portions of its territory. The camp, and as an indirect consequence the state's security, were handed over to the Palestinians. In this sense, the camps became truest spaces of exception as the Lebanese withdrew from them leaving a vacuum filled out by non-Lebanese actors and institutions. This is very similar to the status of foreign military bases as the camps represented the disruption of state's territorial continuity and, to some extent, the whole Westphalian model that guarantees a state full sovereignty, jurisdiction and control over its territory. While the state of exception was imposed on the camps at their very establishment as temporary structures in need of special management, another kind of exception materialised in the moment in which the Lebanese authorities willingly and consciously handed their management over to the PLO and the Palestinian factions.

As the autonomy of the camps and the freedom of the Palestinians outside increased, so, as a consequence, did the clashes with the Lebanese army and Israeli retaliatory attacks. The military presence of the Palestinians in the country divided the public and merged with general economic and social discontent. The outbreak of the civil war in 1976 soon involved the Palestinians in a conflict in which Lebanese militias as well as other foreign armies exploited the lack of order to pursue their own interests and hit the Palestinians and their camps.

The 'sacredness' of Palestinian life and camps (1976-1990)

While the civil war broke out because of political, sectarian and economic reasons, the discourse underpinning the first clashes was one in which Lebanese nationalists confronted the Palestinians. Depicted by the rightist Christian media as a 'war for

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[20] Letter from the British Embassy of Beirut dated 7 January 1971, entitled "Fedayeen in Lebanon", FCO 17-1439 entitled "Internal Security in Lebanon 1971", the National Archives (London).

liberating all of Lebanon' with a clear reference to the Palestinian presence, the narrative warned the Lebanese against the risks of the country's partition into 'Free and Occupied Lebanon' (*al-Amal* Phalange newspaper in Cooley, 1979: 38). Given the rightists and Christian parties' interpretation of the conflict, it was understandable that they attacked and besieged the Palestinian camps that were perceived as the main and ultimate source of instability and insecurity threatening Lebanon. The camps of East Beirut were the first target in 1976. Eager to expel the Palestinians and erase their camps from the Christian enclave of East Beirut, hundreds of civilians including non-Palestinians lost their lives while the camps were razed to the ground or seriously damaged. Though the camps of Tell El-Zaatar and Jisr El-Basha were completely destroyed and never reconstructed, the rightist parties' and militias' goals were only partially achieved. These attacks, in fact, aimed at displacing the Palestinians once again and force them to leave Lebanon. However, this did not occur as the survivors of the Tell El-Zaatar and Jisr El-Basha sieges escaped to West Beirut or wherever they could find temporary accommodation while the conflict was ongoing.[21]

The tactics of attacking one camp to convince the whole Palestinian population in the country to move out of Lebanon was also used later on with even more dramatic consequences. While the camps of the north and the Bekaa Valley remained relatively untouched throughout the civil war, the camps in the south and West Beirut experienced heavy shelling, bombing, death and destruction. Retaliatory attacks from Israel continued on the southern areas of the country where the feda'yeen's presence was more significant. Taking advantage of the weakness of the Lebanese army which was busy in trying to maintain order, the Israeli army invaded the country twice: in 1978 with 'Operation Litani'[22] and in 1982 with 'Operation Peace for Galilee', which was particularly dramatic for the heavy loss of human lives including Lebanese and Palestinians civilians (Fisk, 2001). In motion since February 1982 with troops approaching the border areas, plans for the invasion materialised in June of the same year under the pretext of avenging the attempted killing of Shlomo Argov, Israeli ambassador to the United Kingdom in London. Although the attempted assassination was committed by Palestinian members of a group outside the PLO and despite Yasser Arafat's firm condemnation of the incident, the Israeli

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[21] Insights from interviews with survivors of those sieges. Salma, Shatila, 20 December 2008 and Manar, Shatila, 23 December 2008. Both interviews were conducted in Arabic.
[22] 'Operation Litani' was launched in 1978 and took the name from the Lebanese river Litani of the south. Aim of the operation was the erasure of the Palestinian resistance presence in the south and to push the Palestinian resistance groups north of the river Litani.

government used the event as pretext for the invasion (Fisk, 2001; Jansen, 1982). The invasion of Lebanon had two main objectives: erasing the PLO's political and military might; and creating in Lebanon a state allied to Israel and ready to sign a peace treaty (Farsoun, 1982: 101; for the preparation and goals of the invasion see also Kapeliouk, 1982; Khalidi, 1984b; Schiff and Ya'ari, 1984). While the destruction of the PLO as representative of a national cause claiming a state was the primary goal, as a side effect it was also hoped that the massive attack would convince the Palestinian civilians, left with no protection, to leave Lebanon. It is in this context that the Israeli army found a precious ally in the rightist Christian militias as the desires of the two parties coincided.

South Lebanon was hit the most through bombardments and the infantry's invasion. But Beirut – location of PLO's headquarters and PRM's stronghold – was not spared. The siege of Beirut was atrocious as areas inhabited by the Palestinians or in which the resistance presence was significant became the target of heavy artillery and aerial bombardments. The Lebanese capital and West Beirut, in particular, experienced unprecedented destruction and food shortages as the siege operated also through the cutting of food, water and electricity supplies. As the number of dead and injured, especially among civilians, was increasing, the PLO found itself under extreme pressure to retreat and leave the country so as to spare the further loss of innocent lives and the total destruction of Beirut (Fisk, 2001; Jansen, 1982). Despite the courageous resistance, under the pressure of Philip Habib, U.S. envoy, the PLO agreed to withdraw from Lebanon and relocate elsewhere.

Evacuation, however, was agreed on the sole condition that a contingent of multinational troops would look after the Palestinian civilians and camps in Lebanon (Cobban, 1984: 123-124). While this negotiation proved the diplomatic abilities of the PLO, its evacuation had dramatic consequences for the Palestinian refugees left behind. Although aware that leaving Palestinian refugee camps unprotected during a civil war and in the midst of an Israeli invasion was a great risk, the last Multinational Force troops left Lebanon by September 11, just few days after the PLO completed its own withdrawal on September 1 (Al-Hout, 2004: 2). The safety and security of the Palestinians could no longer be guaranteed and the assassination of the newly elected Lebanese president Bachir Gemayel – founder and former leader of the Lebanese Forces militia – on September 14 prepared the ground for one of the most appalling events of the twentieth century. Under two quite contradictory pretexts, the Israeli army occupied Beirut on September 15, contravening the terms of the Habib agreement. Claiming that West Beirut was still hosting

about 2,000 Palestinian 'terrorists' – to use Israeli vocabulary – and that the civilian population of the areas needed protection from possible Lebanese Forces militias' retaliatory actions, Israeli troops encircled the camp of Shatila and the adjacent areas. Neglecting to protect the civilians, whilst supposedly in charge of the safety and security of West Beirut, the Israeli army let Lebanese Forces' and other Christian militias' members enter the area of Greater Shatila on September 16.[23] For three days, in the area that includes Shatila camp and adjacent quarters inhabited mainly but not exclusively by Palestinians, the militias slaughtered more than 3,000 civilians and abducted hundreds for interrogations. The exact number of victims could never be determined and perhaps will never be known, but mass graves were found around the camp of Shatila and others are yet to be discovered. According to witnesses, corpses were also loaded on trucks and their destination never known (see Al-Hout, 2004; EAFORD, 1983: 114-134; Fisk, 2001: 359-400; Jansen, 1982; Sayigh, 1994: 117-122; Shahid, 2002, 2004).

As witnessed by humanitarian workers, journalists and photographers, the Sabra and Shatila massacre came to be known as one of the saddest and most ferocious chapters of the Lebanese civil war for the cruelty with which it was carried out (Fisk, 2001; Al-Hout, 2004). Though it is commonly believed that the massacre took place in the Shatila camp and involved Palestinians only, Al-Hout (2004) reveals that this is not the case. Certainly the Palestinians were the target of horrific actions and the attack of Shatila camp was part of the plan, but the massacre did not spare tens or even hundreds of non-Palestinians including Lebanese, Syrians, Egyptians, Jordanians, Bangladeshis and Pakistanis, all living in the same area and sharing the same marginal condition of the refugees. Although the slaughter and destruction did not reach the heart of Shatila, it nevertheless hit the camp and its population at its Western, Southern and Northern borders. Those who luckily lived in the Eastern part or the centre of the camp managed to escape as soon as they heard rumours of what was happening at the borders of the camp.[24]

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[23] According to witnesses, beyond the presence of the Lebanese Forces, there were also members of Tiger – a militia linked to former president Chamoun – and of the South Lebanese Army – a militia controlled by Haddad, a former Lebanese army's general, that was trained and supported by Israel (Al-Hout, 2004).

[24] Insights from informal conversation with Ibtisam, Palestinian social assistant living and working in Shatila, on November, 5, 2008. Ibtisam told me that she was inside the camp when the massacre began as her house was located at its centre. She continued her narration of the massacre saying that as soon as her family heard about the slaughter of the Palestinians, they managed to leave the camp. Perhaps exits of the Eastern border provided them with a more secure escape. Despite plans to siege Shatila from everywhere, the attack on its eastern flank was not successful (see also Al-Hout, 2004).

The refugee camp

While a detailed analysis of the events is beyond the scope of the present study, the atrocious acts, the dynamic of the massacre and its aftermath shed light on the ways in which the Palestinian life is conceived. The 'how' and 'why' will never be entirely revealed as proper investigations of the massacre have not been carried out. Yet, the perpetrators of the massacre, their thoughts and premises need to be partially covered in order to understand the ways in which Palestinian life has become ungrievable and the Palestinian residential area destroyable with impunity (Butler, 2009). As both rightist Lebanese militias and Israel had common interests in hitting the camps to force the Palestinians to leave the country (Al-Hout 2004: 272), responsibility lies with both. While direct responsibility is imputed to the Lebanese Forces and other militias carrying out the slaughter and destruction, indirect responsibility must attributed to the Israeli army that was in control of the areas and in charge of its security – as the occupying power under the Geneva conventions – and did not intervene to stop the massacre.

What is striking about these events is the way in which the killing took place and the ways in which the Palestinians were abandoned to their fate by a regular army force that not only did not stop the massacre, but at times might have contributed directly to its actualisation. The only explanation that could shed some light on this massacre would summon the meticulous production of a dehumanisation discourse that prepared the ground for the Lebanese militias to be able to perpetrate such violence and for the Israeli army to be able to stand by impassively. Unprecedented violence was carried out for three days: machine gunning, cold blooded shootings and bulldozed houses with residents to mention but a few. It was as if Palestinians were no longer human, no longer deserving respect, dignity and mercy. No distinction was made between fighters and vulnerable civilians, including the elderly, women, children and disabled, who could not defend themselves. After all, 'Palestinians are Palestinians' as one of the perpetrators of the massacre declared years after with so much indifference.[25] And for those who do not hold indifference to human life, violence can be mastered with practice and time as another affirms:

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[25] Taken from the documentary 'Massaker' (2006), directed by Monika Borgmann, Lokman Slim and Herman Theissen. In this documentary, the directors manage to find and interview former Lebanese Forces militiamen who took an active part in the Sabra and Shatila massacre. The documentary is an attempt to use the Sabra and Shatila event to reflect on individual and collective violence occurred in Lebanon to hopefully help society reconcile after the civil war.

> [...] you go in there. There are hundred people. You kill the first against your will. With the second and the third it's a bit easier. When you get to the fourth you enjoy it. I mean.. Once you have killed the fifth you may as well kill the sixth. You don't mind anymore. With the first one you think "No, that's a man, that's a woman. It's a human being". You look at them in the face but you shoot them anyway. The second is easier. You've got used to it, so to speak. From then on you stop thinking about it.[26]

As these words suggest, while the Palestinians go through a process of dehumanisation, so do the killers who admit that after some assassinations or tortures one simply gets used to violence, as violence becomes a rule and no longer an exception. Although an analysis of violence is not the aim of this section, it is paramount to uncover discourses that allowed for such acts to take place. While direct responsibility of what happened lay with the Lebanese militias entering the camp, the Israeli army holds, at least, indirect responsibility. Aware of what might have happened in the Palestinian areas of Beirut after the assassination of Gemayel – former leader of the Lebanese Forces – the Israelis did not prevent the militias from entering the camp. Although some survivors witnessed Israeli soldiers' sporadic attempts to save the Palestinians and other civilians, the dehumanisation of the victims was a process that affected the Israeli army too. 'Preventive criminalisation' was implanted in the Israeli soldiers' minds even before September 1982. Perhaps still indoctrinated and influenced by Israeli Prime Minister Begin's words of 8 June at the beginning of the 'Operation Peace for Galilee', Palestinians were not perceived as human beings who deserved any protection. Begin's speech to the Knesset drew dangerous parallels aimed at dehumanise the Palestinians. To justify the death and destruction that the Israeli invasion was bringing to Lebanon, Palestinian fighters were defined as 'two-legged animals' and refugee camps were no longer humanitarian spaces hosting defenceless and innocent people, but were turned into 'camps of terrorists' whose aim was the destruction of the Jewish state (Schiff and Ya'ari, 1984: 211, 218). This rhetoric certainly promoted the annihilation of the Palestinian life and spaces. Furthermore, memories of the Holocaust, still so vivid and powerful, emerged again in the Israeli Prime Minister's words so as to legitimise the death of innocent civilians: 'If Hitler had lived in a house where

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[26] Ibid.

there were still 20 residents, couldn't we have bombed that house?' (Begin in Kapeliouk, 1982: 289). After the massacre, the Holocaust was in fact used to justify what was happening in Lebanon to an angry Israeli public who could no longer identify itself as being part of a democratic state. But it was also a moral blackmail addressed to the whole world that could not accuse Israel of committing genocide after being victim of one (see also Fisk, 2001).

Just like the siege of the refugee camps of East Beirut, the massacre of Sabra and Shatila was, therefore, turned into the rightist Lebanese militias' and the Israeli government's own 'Final Solution' to erase the political and biological threat (Khalidi, 1984b: 260). Biopolitical preoccupations were particularly revealed by the killing of innocent civilians, including children and pregnant women. As one of those who carried out the massacre later admitted:

> Our orders were perfectly clear. They were "Go in there and kill everyone!". I don't know if I can explain it properly. We were supposed to go in there and kill. You are asking questions that I don't know the answer to. You are asking me why I did it. I don't know what to say. We all went in there to kill everyone. Absolutely everyone. Young and old. Back then.. speaking for me personally, I thought "this boy could kill me one day. It's best I kill him first. This woman will have children who will grow up. No! It's best if I kill her first. This man could have children. I'd better kill him first". That's the way we thought back then.[27]

Palestinians of West Beirut had to die and possibly the rest of them be scared enough to leave Lebanon for good.

But the Sabra and Shatila massacre was not an isolated case and certainly not the last. Though nothing of similar proportions has occurred again in Shatila, for Palestinians in Lebanon history repeats itself. Soon after the massacre in 1982, the Multinational Force relocated to Lebanon as French and Italian troops took positions around the camps of West Beirut. Though the presence of foreign troops protecting the camps and its inhabitants is

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[27] Ibid.

still remembered today with gratitude by Shatila's people,[28] abduction and killings of Palestinians, especially men and young boys, continued. These acts were committed by a plethora of actors ranging from members of the Lebanese army, to Christian militias such as the Lebanese Forces, but also included members of Amal, the Shi'a militia. Although trained and supported by the PLO, and Fatah in particular, Amal's actions were a clear symptom that the relations between the Palestinians and the Shi'a community were deteriorating (see also Chapter 4). Feeling unsafe and unsure about their future, the Palestinians also experienced evictions in the areas surrounding Shatila. As Sayigh (1994: 222) maintains, 'after 1982 [...] Shi'ites around Shatila began to use their connections with the Army and police to occupy houses or evict tenants, asserting their superiority over Palestinians as citizens against non-citizens'. Although the Palestinians could not foresee the following sieges, the limitation and denial of their residential areas sounded as a sign and an anticipation of the so-called 'War of the Camps' that occurred in the second half of the 1980s. The discourse of citizens vs. non-citizens that at the beginning of the civil war was constructed by the rightist parties was turned into a strategy in the hands of the rising Shi'a's power. Eager to gain support and formal political recognition after being for so long neglected by the Lebanese government's policies, Amal militia and its leaders invoked the discourse that so heavily relied on the necessity to defend the Lebanese nation at the expenses of the Palestinians.

As Sayigh goes on to suggest, to some extent the Shi'a community was even worse-off than the refugee population in Lebanon with poorer households, lower levels of education and a lower rate of professionals. According to the Shi'ites, the Palestinians had always been able to rely on free services provided by UNRWA and had better chances to improve their condition. At the centre of the international and Arab communities' concerns, the Palestinians had been receiving support that the Shi'ites lacked. This made the latter 'more receptive to messages of Lebanese nationalism projecting Palestinians as aliens, intruders and "destroyers of our country"' (p. 222). It is in this context that one must understand and situate the 'War of the Camps'. Directing their anger and frustration against the Palestinians, Amal militia and their leaders promoted themselves as defenders and liberators of the Lebanese nation by attacking and besieging refugee camps of West Beirut – Shatila and Burj El-Barajneh – as well as those in the south from May 1985 until April 1987.

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[28] Insights from interviews and encounters in Shatila during fieldwork.

The refugee camp

The prolonged siege of the camps was also facilitated by the withdrawal of the Multinational Force. Increasingly under attack by Lebanese resistance groups that perceived the presence of foreign troops as the umpteenth attempt to occupy Lebanon and meddle into its internal affairs, U.S., British, French and Italian troops left Lebanon on February 1984 as Amal took control of West Beirut and the former Multinational contingent positions (Fisk, 2001: 534). Prelude to the siege were the continuous evictions of Palestinians from areas surrounding Shatila camp and occupation of vacant houses of flats by displaced Shi'ites protected and taken care of by Amal in control of the area. As Shi'a Lebanese moved around the camp, Amal fortified their positions in its proximity. While the attack on the Palestinian camps and spaces was imminent, rumours that fighters sympathetic to Arafat and the PLO may have come back taking position in the camps of Beirut and the south constituted the perfect pretext for the siege (Sayigh, 1994: 190; The War of the Camps, 1986). Allied with and supported by Syrian intelligence, Shatila was the first camp to be attacked and besieged on May 19, 1985 (Brynen, 1989: 57; Fisk, 2001: 623; Sayigh, 1994: 182-187, 225).

Considered as the 'weakest link' because of its reduced size compared to other camps, a victory on Shatila would have demoralised the inhabitants of other camps too (Sayigh, 1994: 191). Shatila was also a symbol to destroy as the camp is located in the Fakhani area, once headquarters of the PLO and stronghold of the resistance movement (p. 101).[29] Shatila endured three sieges. The first and most unexpected was during the Ramadan period from May 19 until June 22, 1985; the second one from May 29 until June 27, 1986; and the third one, the longest and harshest that lasted for five months, from November 25, 1986 until April, 6, 1987 (ibid). During these sieges, the population of Shatila, Burj El-Barajneh and camps in the south was forced within the camp boundaries, subjected to continuous and prolonged shelling and sniping that left hundreds killed and thousands injured (Al-Bahr, 1987; Firas, 1986; Sayigh R., 1987; 1994; Sayigh Y., 1988; The War of the Camps, 1986). Medicine, food and water supplies had been blocked by Amal who rarely let the International Red Cross visit the camps to take out the wounded and dead. While their camps were reduced to rubble, the Palestinians were reduced to starvation at the point of being forced to eat cats and dogs (Khalili, 2006: 59; Sayigh, 1987).

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[29] Insights from interview with Salah, Shatila, 17 November 2008. Interview conducted in Arabic.

Despite the atrocious violence and loss of lives, people of Shatila resisted. The few feda'yeen left in Shatila and the civilians organised the defence of the camp with the very few light weapons they had. But the resistance was not limited to fighting back as mutual help and solidarity were also strategies that kept the inhabitants of the camp alive (Saiygh, 1987, 1994). As goods and supplies were collectivised and shared, women also gave a great contribution to the defence of the camp keeping high the morale of the fighters, taking care of the injured, cooking for everyone and digging trenches and tunnels. In order to avoid sniping fire outdoors, in fact, tunnels and trenches were dug while some house walls were pulled down so as to facilitate communication and the movement of people, as well as the moving of the wounded and the passage of people through buildings and underground.[30] Bags full of sand were piled up to build and fortify barriers, especially as the houses at the edge of the camp were destroyed (see also Peteet, 2005: 162-163).

Despite the remarkable resistance and spirit of the people of the camp, destruction was wide spread. As the Palestinian life was again revealed as killable with impunity, the Palestinian living environment inside and outside the camp was also the target of harsh violence. While before the actual siege the erasure of the Palestinian living space materialised through the refugees' evictions from houses around the camp and the occupation of vacant flats by displaced Shi'ites, the denial of the right of residence and peaceful living was produced through the fierce siege of the camp that left many homeless and displaced and eighty percent of the houses destroyed (Sayigh, 1994: 322). As people were killed and harassed, the deliberate and unnecessary destruction of the built environment indicates that also Palestinian spaces were the target of these attacks. As embodiment of 'urbicide' and 'spacio-cide' techniques, at stake there was the systematic denial of the Palestinians' living space (Graham, 2002; Hanafi, 2005; Ramadan, 2009). 'Urbicide', as Graham and Hanafi argue, is a term coined by architect Bogdan Bogdanovich as he explains the cultural annihilation and destruction of Balkan cities as symbols of multiculturalism. If in Balkan cities, and Sarajevo in particular, the space of the city became the target of demolition aimed at preventing multiculturalism from flourishing again, the Palestinian camps were target of massive bombardment and destruction aimed at erasing the refugees' presence. Evictions outside the camps, the unnecessary destruction of houses inside the camp and the destruction of the whole infrastructures geared at denying the refugees their right to live in peace and dignity. As vacant houses and flats outside the

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[30] Insights form interview with Ibrahim, Shatila, 20 December 2008. Interview conducted in Arabic.

camp were occupied by displaced Shi'ites and as the camp population of Shatila began including non-Palestinians, the reasons for the 'War of Camps' seem to emerge (see also Doraï, 2006: 156-161).[31] Such destruction cannot be understood or justified by the claim that would-be terrorists or 'Arafatists' were still inside the camps. There were only about fifty fighters in the camp of Shatila and the capture or killing of those do not legitimise such ferocious annihilation but can only be understood within the framework of denying the refugees their most basic right, that of living in Lebanon (Sayigh Y., 1988: 18).

The massacre of Sabra and Shatila, as well as the 'War of the Camps', shows that the Palestinian life and their spaces were treated as *sacer*. As the materialisation of the sacredness in the Agambenian sense (Agemben, 1995a, 1998), the refugees and their camps were killed, harassed, attacked and destroyed with indifference and impunity. While some would argue that all massacres in Lebanon – including the Damour massacre of Lebanese Christians[32] – treated any kind of life as disposable with no distinction between citizens and non-citizens as natural outcome of a civil struggle, I suggest that the permanent sacredness of the Palestinian life and spaces was revealed through the killing and destruction, inconclusiveness of investigations on these crimes and the issue of a Lebanese Amnesty Law (94/91) in 1991 (see also Knudsen, 2007). As regards the Israeli and Lebanese investigations on the 'events' of Sabra and Shatila, the Kahan Report published in February 1983 and the Jermanos Report completed only eleven days after the massacre, did not charge anyone with responsibility for the massacre (Al-Hout, 2004: 320; King-Irani, 2002). As the Israeli and the Lebanese authority blamed one another, those accountable for the 'incident' have yet to be punished and pay their debt with justice. All of them have been conducting a normal life with no consequence for the atrocities committed.

While hiding the truth was the goal of both investigations, the issue of an Amnesty Law in Lebanon further confined such horrific events to the oblivion. Instead of coming to terms with their past and building peace through the rendition of justice and dignity to the victims of the war, the Amnesty Law made the Lebanese forget. A law, that in the words of King-Irani (2002), 'effectively excused any Lebanese citizen or official from prosecution

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[31] Insights from interviews.

[32] As a consequence of the siege and destruction of the Palestinian camps of East Beirut in 1976, the Lebanese leftist forces and Palestinian militias besieged the village of Damour in the Shouf region, south of Beirut. Inhabited by both Christians and Druze, this village was considered the headquarters of one of the Christian party, the National Liberal Party (NLP) led by Camille Chamoun, former Lebanese president. The siege resulted in the massacre of civilians and evictions of the residents of Damour to make space for Palestinian displaced and survivors of the Tell- El-Zaatar massacre (Cooley, 1979).

for war crimes and crimes against humanity committed between 1975 and 1990'. As principles of justice were abandoned just like the forgotten victims of the conflict, the government found the time to make ultimate distinctions as Lebanese were excused but not the Palestinians. The general amnesty was reserved for Lebanese only while Palestinians have been excluded from its benefits. As the law guaranteed the immunity against all the crimes committed during the civil war to Lebanese only, Palestinians could still be prosecuted and some of them have been sentenced to death *in absentia* (Knudsen, 2007: 6). As Palestinians can be charged and executed for offences committed during the civil war, the same treatment is not reserved to the Lebanese whose crimes have been swept away by the Amnesty. Drawing once more distinctions between those who are protected and those who are abandoned, law is the instrument of a sovereign power that cannot help but separate the *sacer* that could be killed with impunity from the one to be taken care of.

As a measure abolishing restrictions imposed by law in 'normal' times, the Amnesty law resembles the *Iustitium* proclaimed by the Roman Senate whenever the Republic was threatened (Agamben, 2005a: 41-51). However, while the suspension of the law in Roman times was declared at the beginning of the war or insurrection, in Lebanon it was applied at its very end. The proclamation of *Iustitium* rendered all measures, which in normal times are prosecuted as criminal offences, necessary and not punishable. Committed in a legal void, they were considered as pure facts with no juridical consequence. And in Lebanon, although the Amnesty Law is retroactive, it has the same effects of the *Iustitium* because violence against the Palestinians is not punishable as it is produced retrospectively in a legal void. Thus the exception hits the Palestinians twice: first, killing them with impunity and, second, excluding them from amnesty and forgiveness; killed with impunity and yet prosecuted for their own actions.

Refugee camps in the aftermath of the civil war:
Whose sovereignty?

The dramatisation of the exception?

In the aftermath of the civil war, the process of reconstruction began though not without difficulties. If during the 'Ayyam Al-Tharwa' (The Days of the Revolution 1969-1982) the camps experienced a vertical and horizontal expansion, thus blurring the

boundaries that kept the Palestinians separated from the Lebanese, the 'War of the Camps' so vividly marked the space of the camps rendering their boundaries visible again. Checkpoints were erected by militia Amal in coordination with the Syrian troops so as to better control the refugees' activities and prevent their movement. While in the period between 1985 and 1987 the checkpoints were controlled by the Shi'a militia, at the end of the 'War of the Camps' this control was passed over to the Syrians. Encircled by the Syrian army that in Lebanon was acting as peace-keeping force waiting for order to be re-established after the civil war, the Palestinians were once more confined to a very limited space and subjected to harassment (Peteet, 2005: 172-173).

The camps of Tell El-Zaatar and Jisr El-Basha (East Beirut) that endured violent sieges and destruction in 1976 have never been reconstructed. The same fate was reserved for the camp of Nabatieh (South Lebanon) that, destroyed during Israeli bombings in the early 1970s, was never rebuilt. In addition to the reduction in the number of the Palestinian camps, the amendment of the law on property (2001) preventing the Palestinians from acquitting real estate induced many to relocate in the remaining camps. Although it is not compulsory for Palestinians to live there, they are left with no alternative as 'lack of access to employment, property, and healthcare, educational and social services outside the camps effectively compels many people to reside there' (Ramadan, 2009: 158). While in other countries a greater percentage of Palestinians have managed to leave the camps, UNRWA statistics show how about fifty percent of the refugees in Lebanon still live in the camps.[33] This number is equalled only by Gaza which is enduring one of the harshest Israeli's blockages and where the number of people living under the poverty line is increasing. Perhaps, the strategy enacted by the Lebanese authorities is an old one: that of rendering the Palestinians' living conditions as miserable as possible so as to convince them to leave Lebanon. The desire to drive the refugees away seems to constitute the main force that would push the Lebanese government to adopt such discriminatory policies so at to force the Palestinians to be confined to the camps in extremely overcrowding and unhealthy environments (Abbas *et al.*, 1997; Centre for Lebanese Studies, 1996; Zeidan, 1999).

While some would suggest that these measures would be necessary in order to concentrate the refugees' presence to better control their activities, this argument is not supported by any evidence. The issue of control and authority in the Palestinian refugee camps in Lebanon is increasingly becoming a thorny challenge and dilemma. While

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[33] Statistics and numbers are available from UNRWA's website at www.unrwa.org (or http://www.unrwa.org/etemplate.php?id=253 last accessed September 2011).

security is depicted as the government's main concern in the aftermath of the civil war, no effective measure has ever been taken by the Lebanese authorities to reinstate any authority over the camps. If after the civil war checkpoints were a reality affecting all the camps preventing the free movement and unlimited reconstruction, the surveillance from the borders has never been accompanied by that within the camps as it happened during the period of the Deuxième Bureau (1959-1969). Indirect control was exercised from the outside as soldiers at the checkpoints questioned the inhabitants and visitors on the reasons for their movement or presence. While this considerably limited the Shatila inhabitants' freedom (Peteet, 2005: 171), the removal of checkpoints during the 1990s was a sign that perhaps control over the refugees' spaces was not the main prerogative and concern of the Lebanese government. The only camps around which the Lebanese authorities still maintain a presence at their borders are the camps of Nahr El-Bared in the North and the camps of the South – Rashidieh, Burj El-Shemali and El-Buss in Tyre, and Ein El-Hilweh and Mieh Mieh in Saida.

Controls in Nahr El-Bared have been strengthened only after the clashes of 2007 in which the Lebanese Army fought a ferocious battle against Fatah Al-Islam, a 'terrorist' group mainly composed of non-Palestinians that made Nahr El-Bared their base. The clashes razed the camp to the ground and left many civilians dead, injured and displaced. As programs of reconstruction of the camp are slowly being actualised, the Lebanese army has placed checkpoints to control all the movements of Palestinians as well as non-Palestinians. According to these projects agreed on by the Lebanese authorities and UNRWA, the reconstructed camp will also host Lebanese authorities' offices within the camp (Ramadan, 2009; see also Brynen, 2009; Hanafi, 2008a). Moreover, according to these plans, Nahr El-Bared will be a model to be replicated in the rest of the Palestinian camps suggesting that, perhaps, regaining control of the refugees' spaces is part of the Lebanese plan.[34]

Nahr El-Bared seems to constitute the exception rather than the rule as no other camp has been 'hosting' Lebanese authorities – police or intelligence services – offices since 1969. Surveillance after the civil war could be considered tight only for the camps of the South where Lebanese soldiers at checkpoints limit the refugees' freedom of movement, prohibit the introduction of any construction materials to repair damaged houses, and exercise indirect control over the camps from the border by means of

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[34] Insights from interview with Lebanese official who desires to remain anonymous, Beirut, 28 November 2008. Interview conducted in English.

restrictions, intimidation and psychological pressures. As Jaber Suleiman explains during our encounter, in the camps of the South the Lebanese authorities want to make the refugees feel their presence all the time, even damaging the Palestinians' job opportunities as they do not let people leave or enter the camp after midnight. Thus a young Palestinian student working in a restaurant of Saida cannot serve the evening shifts that would end at 12am. Arguing that perhaps security is not the main concern and reason for the surveillance of the camps of the South, Suleiman maintains:

> [...] the function of the control is psychological. They want to make people feel that they are controlled. That they are not allowed to live a normal life. That "we are here, we are controlling everything".[35]

Whilst causing psychological distress seems a valid argument given the history of the Lebanese authorities' attitude towards the refugee population, according to some Lebanese officials there are two main reasons why checkpoints have been established around the camps of the South only, with the sole recent exception of Nahr El-Bared in the North. Firstly, the camps of the South are much closer to the border with Israel and if any resistance activity took place, it is more likely that this would occur in the southern region. This explanation would justify Lebanon's security concerns: as the camps of the south are more threatening than others, surveillance, even though through checkpoints only, must be concentrated on these spaces. Although the second reason would not contradict the first one, it has more to do with the Lebanese and regional Realpolitik and subsequent necessary compromises. According to a Lebanese official, security of the camps has always been more of a Syrian concern than a Lebanese one. The long-standing rivalry between the PLO-Fatah and the Syrian regime of the late Assad is played on the Lebanese ground and at the expenses of the refugees (Cobban, 1984; International Crisis Group, 2009: 6; Rougier, 2007: 8-13; Sayigh, 1994: 209-210; Traboulsi, 2007: 205).[36]

From 1976 until 2005 when Syrian troops officially left Lebanon, the Syrian authorities were involved in the Lebanese affairs either officially – by virtue of Arab

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[35] Jaber Suleiman, Mar Elias, 14 January 2009. Interview conducted in English.
[36] Lebanese official who wishes to remain anonymous, Beirut, 28 November 2008. Interview conducted in English.

The refugee camp

League's peacekeeping mandates – or without a formal role intervening in Lebanon to defend their own interests by supporting different parties involved in the conflict. According to some, rather than effectively controlling the camps and the refugees' activities, the presence of checkpoints in the camps of the South would only serve the Syrian interests. As in the aftermath of the civil war Syrian influence in Lebanese politics has expanded, Lebanon is turned into a vassal state at the service of Syria's struggles and best interests. As in the camps of the North, Beirut and Bekaa Valley, Syria's control of refugees' spaces and activities is exercised through pro-Syria Palestinian factions, Lebanese regular army's surveillance needs to be concentrated in the South where camps are in the hands of Fatah and pro-PLO groups. However, there is still a kind of surveillance that while working from the outside seeks to control the inside.

Despite the abrogation of the Cairo Agreement in May 1987 through law No 25/87, accords that for years have legally prevented the Lebanese from entering the camps, Lebanese authorities have never regained control over the Palestinians' camps. While for this there are multiple reasons that are also analysed later, when asked about the rationale of this apparently inexplicable situation, the Lebanese official interviewed replied:

> The answer is very simple. When it [the Cairo Agreement] was
> abrogated, it was abrogated in the Parliament, but don't forget that
> the Syrian presence was still in Lebanon. Syria was manipulating
> the whole political and security scene in the country. Syria did not
> want the government to go into the camps. They wanted to use the
> card of the Palestinians still in their hands.[37]

The card that the Syrian authorities still want to play relates to the Peace Process and the Syrian necessity to recover the Golan Heights from the 1967 defeat before Lebanon could sign a peace treaty with Israel or before the Palestinian Authority could reach an agreement with the Jewish state (Brynen, 1994: 90; Fisk, 2001). Pulling the strings of the Palestinian factions in Lebanon serves the purpose of maintaining a potential threat for Israel. It means showing that only Syria can control the Palestinian resistance and that no attack will occur as long as Syria controls the factions. This would be the reason why the Syrian lobby

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[37] Ibid.

within the Lebanese government did not allow the Lebanese to enter the camps so as to keep the threat to Israel real and possible (see among others Makkawi *et al.*, 2007).

While these explanations have valid points, this argument would no longer make sense after 2005 when Syria withdrew its troops from Lebanon and with them, at least officially, its influence in Lebanese politics. If the Syrian authorities and their pressures were the reasons why the Lebanese did not regain control over the camps, after the withdrawal there would be no impediment for the Lebanese to re-establish their rule and authority over the refugees' spaces. Yet, security seems more of a discursive obsession rather than a real concern. Security may be a preoccupation, but it is often summoned so as to justify harsh and discriminatory measures taken against the Palestinians. In particular, as regards the camps, the discourse constructed around these spaces still bears the signs of the civil war and of a reconciliation that has never taken place between the Lebanese and the Palestinians (Knudsen, 2009).

Perhaps reconciliation is the key word to understand the situation of the camps in Lebanon while putting them in relation to a broader context. The reasons for the Lebanese disengagement from the Palestinians and their spaces must be found in the very aftermath of the civil war that coincided with the Madrid Peace Conference (1991). As discussed above (see Chapter 3), the Lebanese government was greatly influenced by events occurring at the regional and international level and for the 'Lebanese' Palestinians the start of the Peace Process meant the worsening of their situation. This was not only because the hopes in their right of return seemed to fade in favour of a diplomatic arrangement that would have guaranteed a degree of autonomy on the Occupied Territories only, but also because their very condition in Lebanon deteriorated.

While all the parties involved in the Lebanese civil war were part of the reconciliation process in its aftermath, the reconciliation between the Lebanese and the Palestinians has never formally taken place. Involved in and accused of having started the civil war, the Palestinians were excluded from the Taïf Agreement (1989) that officially marked the end of the conflict. While diplomatic encounters between the Lebanese government and the PLO as well as other factions not sympathetic to the latter were held at the beginning of the 1990s, no formal settlement between the parties has ever been reached. And the reopening of a PLO office in Beirut in 2006 has not guaranteed a significant improvement of the refugees' lives. In the early 1990s the meetings between the Palestinian and Lebanese delegations proved unsuccessful. Palestinians promised to hand over all their weapons and welcomed the Lebanese to take positions inside the camps

provided Lebanon guaranteed the refugees civil and social rights (Makkawi *et al.*, 2007). But as heavy artillery had been passed over to the Lebanese authorities no change was recorded on the issue of refugees' basic rights. Afraid that the Peace Process would have pushed Lebanon to naturalise its refugees, the Lebanese authorities did not comply with its promises. Light weapons were kept in the camps and the Lebanese authorities never entered their spaces (Salah, 2000).

As if the Cairo Agreement were still effective, the camps are today considered as islands of non-Lebanese territory as state jurisdiction and control seems not to apply anymore. However, with the abrogation of the Cairo Agreement in 1987, no legal impediment prevents the Lebanese authorities to regain such control (Khalidi and Riskedahl, 2007). It is within this context that the representation of the camps can oscillate between discourses of lawlessness and freedom. 'Zones of lawlessness within sovereign Lebanese territory' (Khalidi and Riskedahl, 2007), the Palestinian camps are depicted as spaces that threaten the security of the country. Because of the lack of control at the hands of the Lebanese authorities and the presence of weapons, these spaces challenge the state's security but guarantee the impunity and freedom of criminals and outlaws. They are spaces in which, according to this narrative, all crimes and criminals conflate as drug-smugglers, killers, thieves and terrorists take advantage of the absence of the state to hide and escape prosecutions. As the late Lebanese journalist Jibran Tuwayni famously affirmed:

> How long will the state erect military checkpoints in residential areas, treating them as though they were camps sheltering wanted people and gunmen, while all the Palestinian camps, which shelter criminals and wanted people, enjoy freedom of movement, politically, militarily and in terms of security, as though they were *security islands* independent of Lebanon politically, militarily and in terms of security?
> (Tuwayni in Khalidi and Riskedahl, 2007; emphasis added)

The refugee camp

The camps are labelled 'security islands'. 'Islands' indicates the extraterritoriality of the Palestinian camps that resemble spots of non-Lebanese territory abandoned by the state and its rule. 'Security' that is not for the Lebanese state, but for criminals that turn the humanitarian refugee camps into refuges for outlaws. By stressing this kind of narrative and the problem of the emergence in the camps of fundamentalist ideologies such as Salafism, the Lebanese authorities framed the events of Nahr El-Bared (2007) within the 'War on Terror' discourse. As El-Natour has also pointed out, the war between the Lebanese army and the terrorist group of Fatah Al-Islam was two-fold: showing the Palestinians that their safety is not guaranteed and that the Lebanese army still holds the ultimate decision on the camps; and showing the world that Lebanon was fighting its own 'war on terror' too.[38] By focusing attention on the problem of the Palestinian camps that host 'terrorists' and urging a solution to the Palestinian refugees' issue, the Lebanese authorities implied that the 'plague' of terrorism may expand beyond Lebanese boundaries and constitute a threat for the region and Western states too (see also Elden, 2009: 95-96; on the rise of Salafism in Palestinian refugee camps in Lebanon see International Crisis Group, 2009: 24-28; and Rougier, 2007).

Despite this representation of the Palestinian camps as refuges of terrorists and outlaws, the Lebanese authorities still do not dare to enter and take any control, a situation that dramatises the exceptionality of these spaces and challenges the very Lebanese sovereignty. But these islands of extraterritoriality punctuate the Lebanese landscape as an 'archipelago of exceptions'. Here, the metaphor of archipelago is particularly appropriate. As Weizman (2007: 13) maintains, it is an expression that 'describe[s] a multiplicity of discrete extraterritorial zones, the spatial expression of a series of "states of emergency", or states of exception that are either created through the process of law [...] or that appear *de facto* within them' as 'sovereign power is either deposed or challenged'. The camps are, therefore, extraterritorial because 'they are positioned outside of the sovereignty and jurisdiction that surrounds them' (p. 14); they escape the effective control of the Lebanese authorities and exist as almost independent spatialities. Although a law that legalises such extraterritoriality seems to not exist, *de facto* the Lebanese government and army have lost, or have decided to lose, control over the camps that are administered by the Palestinians. While Elden (2009: 59) would define them as 'intraterritorial spaces' as they are located in *de jure* Lebanese sovereign space, he argues that these spaces 'demonstrate the suspension

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[38] Insights from interview with Souheil El-Natour, Mar Elias, 24 December 2008. Interview conducted in English.

of sovereign control through absence rather than its intensification through executive decision' as if 'the sovereignty/territory relationship has broken down'.

In this way making a distinction between Agamben's take on sovereign power intensified in the space of exception, Elden suggests that quite the contrary may also occur. In the case of the Palestinian camps in Lebanon we are not witnessing an intensification of sovereign power. It is precisely the sovereign's abandonment, because of 'absence or weakness', that dramatises the exceptionality of the camp. Apparently rather than an exclusion being followed by an inclusion – the camps as exceptions where normal juridical order is suspended but included in the sovereign's management of the space – Palestinian refugee camps in Lebanon seem to follow the pattern of a double exclusion: spaces where the normal juridical order is deactivated and that are further abandoned through the withdrawal of management and control. I call it 'dramatised exceptionality' because it is as if the camps are *aban*doned twice: first, by placing them in a different politico-juridical order; second, through an absence and lack of state authorities' engagement.

The absence of the Lebanese sovereign control may indeed open up resistance and give rise to the production of other kinds of powers and sovereigns. Echoing Agnew, Elden (2006: 483) maintains that the problem is not the territorial continuity but control over it. If no control is applied, rule and stability do not exist and exception may expand indefinitely. Indeed, warning against the risks of establishing spaces of exception, Papastergiadis (2006: 435) argues that while this is a measure taken to protect the nation and the sovereignty of the state, it could result in 'boomerang effects'. Bearing in mind Agamben's reflections, he goes on to suggest that 'while political philosophers have justified the sovereign's right to suspend the rule of law and create a state of exception, as the necessary means for preserving the ongoing viability of the state or long-term integrity of the law, they have overlooked the extent to which this violent means not only becomes an infinite end, but also undermines the very security it promises'.

The Lebanese decision to not control the camps produces complex geographies of exception according to which *de jure* sovereignty is Lebanese, but *de facto* jurisdiction and control are Palestinian. As the Lebanese state surrenders control over portions of its territory, a 'contingent sovereignty' is produced within its very boundaries (Elden, 2009). Far from summoning the 'failed state' discourse that has for long been produced and reproduced to justify invasions or meddling in other countries' affairs (Elden, 2009: 63-109; Jones, 2008; Morton, 2005), the abandonment of the camps leaves a vacuum that could be filled by other actors ready to threaten the stability and security of the state.

The refugee camp

Considering these assumptions, the Lebanese government's decision to completely withdraw from the Palestinian spaces has yet to find a plausible rationale. Whilst the 'why' may sound less interesting than the 'how', the key to understand the Lebanese authorities' reasons may be found in the relation between security and responsibility. As two sides of the same coin, the Lebanese do not wish to control the camps as they disclaim any responsibility over them and their inhabitants.[39] Security in facts holds a much wider meaning. As Suleiman suggests, it does not mean oppressing people or controlling the freedom of expression for the Raison d'État. Security may bear a deeper social meaning as it entails the responsibility for the refugees' wellbeing:

> If the Lebanese government are [sic] ready to come into the camps, because you want to control security? You have to improve the living conditions, to eradicate the causes of instability or any kind of security troubles because this is human security, the social security. Not only the security which brings the Lebanese army into the camps controlling people.. But I think the Lebanese are not yet ready for this..[40]

Improving the living conditions and granting civil, social and economic rights means providing security as the latter becomes a synonym of responsibility. This is a responsibility that the Lebanese do not intend to take as they prefer to preserve an open ambiguity about the political and juridical status of the camps. While at stake is a complete abandonment, the uncertain status of the refugees' spaces is continuously maintained so as to exploit the exception. Precisely because no legal definition is applied, the camp is kept in the zone of indistinction where the ultimate sovereign – the Lebanese state/government – can still play with the decision. Echoing Minca's (2005: 409) reflections, if 'the exercise of sovereign power is based on *potenza* and not on force itself', this means that at any moment the Lebanese authorities may claim back their lost control. It is a potentiality that, for example, was actualised in the space of Nahr El-Bared, though with catastrophic consequences for the camp razed to the ground and its inhabitants killed and displaced. It is

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[39] Insights from interview with Jaber Suleiman, Mar Elias, 14 January 2009 and interview with Souheil El-Natour, Mar Elias, 24 December 2008. Both interviews were conducted in English.

[40] Interview with Jaber Suleiman, see note above.

The refugee camp

an actuality that, at least in the Lebanese case, seems not knowing of any other means but violence. Hence, the spectre and spectacle of the scaffold returns as a public manifestation of the sovereign's reactivation of his absolute power over life and death of his subjects (see Foucault, 1991: 47-49). Speaking about the events of Nahr El-Bared Suleiman suggests that:

> [...] they [the Lebanese authorities] needed a victory. The army was concentrated in Nahr El-Bared against Fatah Al-Islam and to provide it as a model.. this is a model: "We are doing this in Nahr El-Bared and we are going to repeat it in other camps if Fatah Al-Islam or any other group will be generated in other camps". It was some kind of this is.. "We want to give you a lesson", you know? That what happened in Nahr El-Bared can be repeated. So this is a message..[41]

Through the spectacle of Nahr El-Bared, the Lebanese authorities re-instated their power and right to intervene at any moment to maintain order. As Foucault (1991: 57-58) describing 'the spectacle of the scaffold' put it:

> An execution that was known to be taking place, but which did so in secret, would scarcely have had any meaning. The aim was to make an example. Not only by making people aware that the slightest offence was likely to be punished, but by arousing feelings of terror by the spectacle of power letting its anger fall upon the guilty person.

The message of the Lebanese authorities was, in fact, not only directed to the inhabitants of Nahr El-Bared, but to all Palestinians in Lebanon as in the words of Suleiman (see above).

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[41] Ibid.

The refugee camp

From a disciplinary apparatus that operates on space, enclosures and strict control and surveillance – as it was during the period of the Deuxième Bureau – we witness a passage to a 'security apparatus' in which different technologies of power – the classic theory of sovereignty as understood by Foucault, the disciplinary and regulatory modes – are modulated and assembled in different ways (Foucault, 2007, 2008). The old sovereign's right over life and death of its subjects, re-deployed during the siege of Nahr El-Bared, is re-utilised within the security era as Palestinian life is rendered once again killable.

In this context 'the spectacle of Nahr El-Bared' aims at warning the rest of Palestinians in Lebanon living in the camps: if they let other terrorist groups penetrate the camp the Lebanese authorities may intervene. Through intervention, a disciplinary one, power regains control over the space of the camp in which the army is re-deployed after years of absence. But when I argue that the state 'may' intervene, the conditional was the most appropriate modal. As different technologies of power, which Foucault identified with different periods of the history, are re-utilised and assembled, less certain is the ways in which these techniques are pulled together. Although in the era of security the state lets things be and intervention is limited, the latter does not completely disappear. It works on modulation. Control may be 'free-floating' – working on subjectivities more than spaces – in which case 'what counts is not the barrier but the computer that tracks each person's position' (Deleuze, 1992: 7; see also Amoore, 2006; Amoore and de Goede, 2008). This is particularly manifested in the ways in which Palestinians are caught in the net of power through the stripping of their rights. It is an exclusion that captures them no matter where they reside or move and that follows them wherever they are. Yet, it is also a power that, on the one hand abandons control over the camp, only to be able to re-territorialise itself at need through the utilisation of disciplinary techniques focusing on space and enclosure – as the re-deployment of the Lebanese army within the space of Nahr El-Bared (see Collier, 2009; Foucault, 2007, 2008).

The concept of potentiality, however, seems to include all these possibilities and technologies as the ways in which these technologies are assembled and re-deployed imply choices of acting or non-acting, and decisions on the full or partial withdrawal of control. The decision of ceding control over the camps is the result of the potentiality of not-to-be and not-to-act (Minca, 2005: 409). As master of this decision, the ultimate sovereign power remains the Lebanese state. While the latter can decide otherwise in any moment by suddenly actualising its potentiality to-be and to-act in the most violent ways, until that

moment comes new possibilities are created. As the sovereign withdraws direct exercise of power in and on the space of exception, the potentiality not-to-be opens up chances of resistance, forms of self-administration and governance.

The sovereign retreats: The emergence of 'petty sovereigns'

As the Lebanese authorities refuse to enter the camps, and the Palestinians to some extent welcome this refusal because of the memories of the Deuxième Bureau period (1959-1969), the vacuum left is filled by a plethora of actors that control and administer these spaces. Devoid of Lebanese control, the Palestinian camps witness the emergence of new forms of power as 'petty sovereigns' substitute themselves to the state's authorities. From the Palestinian popular, security and village committees, to humanitarian organisations and various political factions, Palestinian refugee camps in Lebanon experience a multiplicity of sources of power (Hanafi, 2008a, 2008b, 2008c; Kortam, 2007, 2008; Peteet, 1987, 2006; Suleiman, 1999).

While some may think that UNRWA could have some say in the administration of the camps because of its role in their establishment and recognition, the UN agency has never had any decision-making prerogative. As UNRWA and NGOs operate in the camps with the sole aim of providing basic services, ultimate decisions concerning the camp are up to the popular committee. As discussed above, from the early 1970s the camps have been administered by popular committees whose members were appointed by each political group present in the camp in addition to some members of the popular unions – such as those of workers and women – independents, and notables of the camps (Kortam, 2007). As regards their tasks, they operated as municipalities and, thanks to PLO funding, they took care of services such as water, electricity, and the general improvement of the infrastructures. However, since today funding is no longer available, popular committees struggle to fulfil the expectations of the camp population as basic needs are not always covered. As Khalil, member of the Shatila popular committee, explained to me, nobody is offering any financial support. The committee does not get money from the PLO or UNRWA and very rarely it receives some voluntary donations from charities. As they struggle to maintain basic standards of living, the committee can indirectly rely on the donations that the European Union has offered to the municipality of Ghobeiry where Shatila is located. Therefore, cooperation with Ghobeiry authorities becomes essential for

the maintenance of the electricity networks and sewage improvements.[42] Such cooperation is not only indispensable for the provision of services to Shatila, but it proves crucial on other fronts too. During the civil war, for example, the municipality took care of the rubble clearance around the camp and still today is responsible for the maintenance of the Sabra and Shatila cemetery outside the camp (Khalili, 2007: 282).

Beyond the provision of these basic services and supplies, the popular committee is responsible for other administrative issues as it keeps notes of names and information of people living in the camp. To this end, registers are kept updated with details relating to the camp inhabitants and all real estate transactions occurring in Shatila. Anyone wishing to buy, sell or rent a house does not refer to the municipality of Ghobeiry but to the popular committee that prepares the necessary documentation. While for Palestinians it is forbidden to buy or inherit properties outside the camps, because of the exceptionality of the refugees' spaces these kinds of transaction are allowed to take place within the camp boundaries also allowing for informal economies to arise. These are economies that escape the control of the Lebanese state. As he shows me copies of a recent contract between a Palestinian and a Lebanese for the acquisition of a house in Shatila, Khalil says that it is not compulsory for them to register these transactions and the names of people inhabiting the camp. Even though the Lebanese authorities do not ask for copies of this documentation and registers, the popular committee prefers to do so also for security reasons. If any problem occurs, in fact, the committee knows who lives in the camp and where.

While the committee holds information about everyone living in the camp and on everything happening, this knowledge is not possessed by Lebanese authorities. As this knowledge is essential to provide better security and services to the residents, the possession of this information makes the popular committee the first key interlocutor for everyone who wishes to have statistics about Shatila and its population. UNRWA, for example, is constantly in touch with the committee in order to gather information about the Palestinian residents to publish reports or to provide better services. As this knowledge becomes precious, Khalil makes clear that anyone who wants to know anything about the camp needs to contact them stressing that 'They need us. We don't need them'.[43] While developing a governance system independent from the Lebanese authorities, the committee

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[42] Khalil (member of Shatila Popular Committee), Shatila, 24 December 2008. Interview conducted in Arabic.
[43] Ibid.

is, at least formally, solely responsible for the security of Shatila in collaboration with the security committee functioning as a police force. By developing a sort of territorial competence and jurisdiction, the two committees' authority is not limited to the administration of the Palestinians' affairs only as it also includes non-Palestinians that, by virtue of their residence in the camp, fall under the committees' jurisdiction and decision-making.

Though formally the popular committee has competence over the space of the camp only, it seems that its authority may also leak outside Shatila's boundaries. Afef, for instance, whom I met in Shatila, lives in a house right next to Shatila's boundary. As her house lies outside the space of the camp as agreed by the Lebanese authorities and the League of the Red Cross in 1949, she would not be entitled to the assistance of the popular committee. Yet, as she explains, Shatila popular committee arranged the installation of a small electricity generator in her house.[44] This shows how the committee's territorial competence may be supplemented by a 'national' one as the exercise of control exceeds the camp to include Palestinians residing right next to the boundary. Their sphere of action can never be determined with precision, but it is likely that the committee may keep discretional room for decisions on whether to intervene or not beyond the space of the camp.[45]

Although the exact extent of the popular committee's authority remains unknown, as Khalil denies any involvement outside the official boundaries of the camp, the popular committee does not administer the camp alone. As security is one of the main concerns – perhaps especially after the events of Nahr El-Bared – cooperation with the security committee is crucial. However, the judicial system of the camp is rather complicated and no clear rule applies. As if developing another kind of judicial procedures, the committees have their own methods to deal with criminals and offenders without involving the Lebanese authorities. For small offences such as theft for instance, members of the committees investigate the matter. When they find the thief, they force him/her to give back the stolen object or pay back the value of the object. In both cases, the punishment of the offender is completed only after he/she spends some time in prison. As Khalil explains, there are rooms in the camp of Burj El-Barajneh, south of Shatila, that function as a prison

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[44] Insights from interview with Afef, Shatila area, 13 November 2008. Interview conducted in Arabic.

[45] Also according to UN-HABITAT and UNDP report (2010), which focuses on Palestinian informal gatherings ('Adjacent Areas') around the camps of Nahr El-Bared, Beddawi, Ein El-Hilweh and Mieh Mieh, popular committees of refugee camps may intervene in the management of areas surrounding the refugee camps.

for such offenders. But there are no written rules as the punishment is decided by the members of the committees judging case by case (see also Peteet, 1987). The popular and security committees of the camp would alert the Lebanese authorities only in the case of serious crimes such as homicide. In this case, since Lebanese authorities cannot enter the camp unless accompanied by the security committee, the delivery of the offender is arranged between Lebanese and Palestinian authorities. As emerged during the interviews, if an inhabitant of the camp commits a crime outside the camp and the Lebanese catches them outside Shatila, there is no need for further cooperation. But if the crime is committed outside the camp and the offender enters the camp in the attempt to escape Lebanese jurisdiction, then the popular and security committees of the camp are contacted by the Lebanese police to arrange the handover of the criminal to the Lebanese authorities. This need to co-operate shows how Lebanese sovereignty is conditional and contingent to the Palestinian cooperation and good will.[46]

According to El-Natour,[47] there is full cooperation between the camp committees and Lebanese police on matters of security. After the departure of the PLO and the destruction of great part of the institutions and infrastructure the Palestinians no longer have courts and tribunals, so those who commit serious crimes are, or at least should be, handed over to the Lebanese. If the Lebanese want to arrest someone that lives or hides in the camp, before handing over the wanted the committees of the camp first investigate the accusation. And secondly, only if the majority of the committees members agree, the suspect is given to the Lebanese police or the security committee accompanies members of the police inside the camp to carry out the arrest. This procedure is essential to guarantee the people of the camp fair treatment. Echoing El-Natour, in fact, if the Lebanese claim that a terrorist is hiding in the camp, the committees require evidence of the accusation. It is then up to the camp's committees to verify and decide if the person is actually a terrorist and whether to hand him/her over or not. These measures are necessary to protect the camp's inhabitants and to guarantee that the reason why they may be taken into Lebanese custody is because of an actual crime committed and not because of some other political reasons or interests, but also to protect the rest of the camp's population from potential attacks as El-Natour makes clear:

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[46] See also interview to one of the members of the Shatila security committee in Asser, (2008) (newspaper and online articles section).
[47] Insights from interview with Souheil El-Natour, Mar Elias, 24 December 2008. Interview conducted in English.

> You are leaving the responsibility for the security of the camp in
> order to allow a lot of terrorists to come and to give [have] the
> pretext to destroy it?! No! You want X, or Y or Z? We discuss?
> Yes! We are searching to deliver him.[48]

Yet, security and justice may not be as simple as they are depicted by Khalil or El-Natour. As corruption and struggles for power and control spread, the safety and security of its inhabitants can no longer be assured. This is the moment in which bare life may be produced by the very Palestinian actors in charge of the wellbeing of the camp's population. Shatila refugees are increasingly complaining about the lack of security. While some argue that this is due to the growing presence of foreigners in the camp and outlaws hiding from the Lebanese police, a great part of this lack of order is caused by the way in which security is managed. The independent – from the Lebanese jurisdiction – judicial system developed in the camp by the popular and security committees does not assure justice for those who are victims of an offence. While Khalil maintains that all the crimes committed in the camps are taken care of and offenders punished, Zahra, the social worker accompanying me in my encounters in the camp, raises some concerns. She argues that in the NGO for which she works a computer was stolen about ten years before. The NGO contacted the popular committee to report the theft, but so far nothing happened on that front. The computer was never found. Nor the thief.[49]

The theft of a computer is not the worse that can happen. Although Shatila camp seems to be relatively safer than other camps where different factions' litigations often turn into shootings and homicides, still the management of the camp's affairs and crimes is disputable. This is perhaps an outcome of a lack of central authority, but justice may be a quite relative word. Hakim, a Palestinian student living in Shatila, told me how he ended up not trusting anyone in the camp: not the popular committee, nor any other organisation claiming to help people. According to him, everyone promises solutions and improvements, but ultimately no one does anything. Lamenting serious concerns for the lack of a clear judicial system in the camp that would punish criminals, he says:

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[48] Ibid.

[49] Insights from interview with Khalil and Zahra's insights on the work of the popular committee in the camp, Shatila, 24 December 2008.

> I will tell you something.. if I kill someone.. if I have one of my parents [perhaps meaning relatives] like in Fatah or some Palestinian organisation I never catch to the police or the Lebanese government [...] [if] I'm alone and no one can help me, they give me to the Lebanese people and government, you know... This is the rule here.[50]

Maintaining that having some links with some factions in the camp would guarantee his impunity, Hakim makes clear that in the Palestinian camps impunity is the rule rather then the exception. He complains that although people still refer to the popular and security committees to deal with a crime, the authorities of the camp do not properly intervene and nothing is done to catch the offender. As he reinforces his argument, Hakim argues that every organisation in the camp protects their friends and relatives. Paying bribes to the committees is enough to wash away any culpability. The situation has become unbearable in Shatila to the point that he states he would rather see the Lebanese authorities in the camp than live in a place where justice and honesty do not exist. But Hakim's opinion on the eventual Lebanese authorities' return seems a desperate call for a better future that might not be shared by those who much older than him actually experienced the authority of the Lebanese during the period of the Deuxième Bureau.

The same concern for the insecurity and injustice for the people of the camp are also raised by Mahmoud who so passionately laments the lack of order and honesty. Arguing that only those affiliated or related to some particular faction can see their condition improved or can be saved from a jail sentence, he denounces the corruption of some Palestinian factions.[51] Everyone that is connected to an influential political faction or member can commit whatever crime while impunity is guaranteed by acquaintances or relatives. A similar reflection is developed by Hanafi (2008b: 92; 2010: 61). In a camp of the south two men whose families are connected to Fatah, leaders of the camp, raped a young girl in 2007. After two weeks only of imprisonment, the boys were released and when the family of the girl threatened to sue them in front of a Lebanese court, the Fatah leaders of the camp menacingly warned them to not do so.

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[50] Interview with Hakim, Shatila, 17 December 2008. Interview conducted in English.
[51] Inisights from interview with Mahmoud, Shatila, 14 November 2008. Interview conducted in Arabic.

The refugee camp

As refugees living in the camps are no longer at the mercy of the Lebanese police or intelligence services, they certainly become the victims of their own Palestinian 'brothers' and other kinds of violence. No longer generating from the Lebanese authorities, the decision on the exception and bare life is taken in the very same space of exception by the Palestinians as the inhabitants of the camps feel increasingly insecure and unprotected. Moreover, with corruption spreading, justice is not the only concern for the camp's population. People have definitely lost confidence in those who are supposed to represent them and many denounce corruption of the justice system and the bad management of the camp. As the popular committees attempt to show their moral and political integrity, in the underground other dynamics produce growing feelings of dissatisfaction and frustration. Disillusioned with political factions that once they had so vividly supported, refugees are realising that only formal affiliations and open support of a party pay back. Thinking and acting differently might confine people to the oblivion. According to Mahmoud, the PLO is still distributing funding to the camps, but he laments the fact that this money never reaches the poorest. Implying corruption, he complains: 'Why some people should live and other die?'.[52] If one knows influential people that control the chains of money distribution, one survives. If one lacks such connections, one is forsaken.

Despite the development of self-governance in Palestinian refugee camps, this system does not guarantee the justice and the wellbeing that the camp's population deserve after years of marginalisation and hardship. Furthermore, singling out the 'sovereign' in Shatila is still a hard task. Khalil is part of the popular committee that is 'recognised' as handling all the administration issues and the inhabitants of the camp indirectly recognise its authority by addressing it for the solution of a dispute, a real estate transaction or the need of a service. Perhaps, this recognition is more due to the committee's long-standing control of the camp rather than a real belief that members of the committee are competent. Yet, Khalil's committee is not the only one. As of 2008/2009, Shatila, in fact, hosts a total of three popular committees, all competing with each other to gain control over the camp. As Kortam (2007) suggests, the rise of multiple sovereigns in the Palestinian camps is not only the outcome of the Lebanese disengagement, but the result of the void also created by the PLO's departure in 1982. While until 1982 popular committees used to cooperate with the PLO, its withdrawal prompted struggles over power and control between the different Palestinian factions. Since the PLO's departure, there is no unified political authority that

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[52] Ibid.

may represent the Palestinians. The division of the Palestinian movement is today manifested in the rise of multiple popular committees in each camp. As the main split used to be represented by the pro-Syrian and pro-PLO factions (see also Cobban, 1984), today the reality is more complex than this because of the rise of Islamic fundamentalist movements alongside nationalist ideologies (Rougier, 2007). While the presence of Islamic groups is not recorded in Shatila, or at least with no significant relevance, the camp hosts three popular committees: Khalil's group, closer to pro-Syria tendencies; Fatah's and pro-PLO's committee, which after the Syrian withdrawal in 2005 managed to re-establish a presence in the camps of Beirut (see also Traboulsi, 2007: 228-231); and an elected committee that today is not very active.

As for the latter, Shatila could claim to be the first Palestinian camp in which elections for its representatives ever took place. Perhaps tired of not being able to fully contribute to the appointment of the popular committee's members, elections were held on May 22, 2005 (Kortam, 2007). As a result of the elections, a committee was formed with the task of improving services not taken care of properly by the other authorities in the camp. The elected committee was able to solve some problems related to the supply of electricity by directly negotiating with the Lebanese electricity company and obtaining a second transmitter that improved the provision of electricity. It also took care of the camp's waste during the days in which UNRWA did not arrange the collection and managed to resolve social problems and domestic disputes. Although the elected committee remains in place only nominally because of countless obstacles it had to face – not least the unsuccessful cooperation with the other two committees of the camp – the election itself represents a positive democratic development and shows the ability of the Palestinians to organise themselves in harsh conditions (ibid).

The lack of cooperation, the rise of corruption and the struggles for control show the complexity of power relations and multiplicity of sources of power emerging in the camp. As in Shatila the main popular committee stands out as exercising more authority than others, other 'petty sovereigns' materialise in the refugees' space challenging the dominant authority and proposing new alternatives and ways of operating in and administering the camp. Though the path towards a real change and pluralisation of Shatila's administration is still long, small gestures give way to hope for a better future. And perhaps it is precisely this scope for hope that shows the most encouraging and constructive side of the exception.

The refugee camp

Positive and productive exceptions: The way to hope and resistance

Whilst Weizman (2007: 18) argues that extraterritorial spaces could constitute serious challenges for the security of the state, he goes on to suggest that the 'archipelago of exception' might also offer positive outcomes. Allowing for the 'formation of self-governing society', the extraterritoriality might give opportunities for people that in this way can 'reaffirm their existence as political beings'. From a technology of separation, confinement and exclusion, the camp can turn into a space that allows everything that is excepted for the refugees outside. Paradoxically, the space of exception provides the refugees with the chance to perform all the practices that are forbidden to them beyond its boundaries.

As discussed above, for instance, while the Palestinians are legally prevented from buying or inhering real estate, this opportunity is created within the camp. Although formally the state of the land on which the camps have been established is uncertain and certainly does not belong to the refugees, the Palestinians have created an informal economy of real estate. They build, rent, sell and buy houses or rooms (see also Chapter 6). Concluding transactions on real estate allows the refugees to improve their income or find cheap solutions for living when residing outside the camps becomes prohibitive. While this may seem problematic as not being able to live anywhere else is part of a discriminatory policy adopted by the Lebanese government, the camp becomes an opportunity for normalcy such as owning a house, economic transactions and profit.

Moreover, as job opportunities are curtailed to the refugees by means of laws and decrees applying the reciprocity principle, Palestinians are able to practice their professions and work inside the camps. For example, as doctors are prevented from working in Lebanese hospitals and clinics despite their knowledge, specialisations and experience, they can do so in the camp where they can open their own clinic or work for UNRWA's and Palestinian Red Crescent Society's health centres. This is the case of Dr. Suleiman for instance (as discussed in Chapter 4). While from time to time and informally he performs surgery in Lebanese hospitals, this occasional income is not enough to sustain his family. Hence his decision to open a clinic inside the camp where he can work on a daily basis and where his income, even though low, is more regularly guaranteed. The same applies to pharmacists as those who managed to graduate or acquire the knowledge but cannot work outside the camp can do so inside the camp by opening their own drugstore.

The refugee camp

Although it seems that opening any other shop is not forbidden to them outside, doing it in the camp is easier and more profitable. Extraterritoriality, in fact, implies a detachment from the normal juridical and political system of the state from which they are conceptually separated. But it means being detached from the state economic system too as the exceptionality of the camp is maintained also as regards taxation. As the merchandise in the camp is not subject to taxation, the goods are cheaper than in other places (Hanafi and Tiltnes, 2008). From informal chats and encounters with Lebanese acquaintances during my fieldwork, it emerged that the camps' better prices attract Lebanese customers too. It seems that particularly common among those Lebanese who are not scared to access the camp is the purchase of replacements of car parts, for example, or the fixing cars which is much cheaper in the camp than outside. And while for Lebanese buying products in the camps is convenient, for Palestinians it is an opportunity of income and survival. This also shows that the economy of the camp is not as closed as one may think. Although very gradual and slow, this openness offers a potential for economic regeneration.

The camp is the space where it is also possible to maintain the tradition and more intimate relations – everyone knows everyone – thus it is also the place where long-lasting and trust-worthy relationships, acquaintances, and friendships develop giving rise to solidarity, mutual help and job opportunities. Aziza, a Lebanese hairdresser married to a Palestinian and living in Shatila, told me that she has more clients in the camp than outside.[53] And perhaps word of mouth on her ability as hairdresser may spread more quickly within the concentrated space of the camp than in other more dispersed areas. As everyone knows everyone – or at least this is the impression one might get by simply walking in the alleys and observing people' non-stop greetings and chats – the chances to get more customers or coming to know of job opportunities is greater within the space of the camp.

As the camp is not only synonymous with oppression and violence, even those who have managed to find another accommodation commute daily to work there. While I am not arguing that the decision to work or live in the camp is the outcome of a free choice (as this is certainly not the case due to countless restrictions and discriminatory measures), Palestinians constantly show their strength and remarkable ability to overcome their difficult condition. Despite high unemployment rates and extremely high levels of poverty, by exploiting the very same exception that was meant to marginalise and exclude them, the

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[53] Insights from interview with Aziza, Shatila, 27 December 2008. Interview conducted in Arabic.

refugees have reinvented their roles and with them have transformed the function of the camp from constriction to possibility. As the camp opens up new ways of being and living, everything forbidden outside is allowed inside.

Concluding remarks

The refugee camp is born as a space that gathers the displaced to better offer humanitarian relief and assistance. Yet, as demonstrated in the first pages of this chapter, the Palestinian camps in Lebanon from humanitarian spaces were turned into spaces of surveillance. As the camp becomes the technology of a disciplinary power obsessed with spatial orders and distinctions, it allows for the separation of the Palestinians from the Lebanese citizens preventing their integration in host society and also facilitates the control and surveillance of the refugees' activities and movements. This was particularly true during the period of the Deuxième Bureau when the Palestinians were at the mercy of the Lebanese authorities. Yet, power does not only operate in the ways imagined by Agamben. While the sovereign may decide whom to cast out the normal juridical order and to strip of rights, refugees challenge the Lebanese authorities by resisting arbitrary violence and liberating their camps.

Although during the civil war the Palestinians and the camps were treated as *sacer*, killed and destroyed with impunity, Palestinians camps today present an anomalous situation. *De jure* they are part of Lebanese sovereign territory. *De facto* they are controlled by Palestinians factions. After the Cairo Agreement (1969) and especially after the civil war, in fact, it seems that the exceptionality of the space of the camp is dramatised. As subject to a double a*ban*donment, the refugee spaces are still placed outside the normal juridical order, but this exclusion from the normal politico-juridical system seems not to be followed by an inclusion in the domain of power as Lebanese authorities disengage from control and intervention. From a disciplinary mode typical of the Deuxième Bureau era (containment, isolation and surveillance), power turns to a security mode. It reduces interventions and lets things be and happen. Although interventions are limited, risks, advantages and disadvantages are meticulously calculated.

Though the mode of power changes – from a disciplinary to a securitarian – Foucault (2007, 2008) reminds us that this does not mean that one technology replaces the other. As discipline does not disappear completely, nor does the old theory of sovereignty according to which the sovereign holds the right over the life and death of his subjects. In

the security mode, different technologies of power are re-deployed and assembled in different ways as it was shown in the case of Nahr El-Bared. Although it may seem that the Lebanese authorities may have ceded the control of the camps completely to the Palestinians, by attacking the camp they show how they may reclaim back that control at any moment. The control exercised over the camps or the state authorities' absence are the manifestation of the sovereign's *potenza*: a potentiality to-act or not-to-act, to-control or not-to-control.

As the camp is included in the domain of sovereign power through potentiality, the sovereign's decision not-to-act opens up opportunities of resistance as well as positive and negative self-governing practices. Because of the corruption and the multiplicity of 'petty sovereigns' arising in the space of the camp, the bareness of the refugees' lives could be revealed by decisions taken by the Palestinian governing the camps. But the positive side of the exception is that the Palestinians, prevented from working or buying real estate outside the camps, can reproduce a sort of normalcy within the space of the camp by exploiting its very exceptionality.

6- Campscapes:

Blurred boundaries and exception in Beirut

One of the essential characteristics of modern biopolitics [...] is its constant need to redefine the threshold in life that distinguishes and separates what is inside from what is outside. Once it crosses over the walls of the oikos and penetrates more and more deeply into the city, the foundation of sovereignty – nonpolitical life – is immediately transformed into a line that must be constantly redrawn. Once zoē is politicized by declarations of rights, the distinctions and thresholds that make it possible to isolate a sacred life must be newly defined. And when natural life is wholly included in the polis – and this much has, by now, already happened – these thresholds pass, as we will see, beyond the dark boundaries separating life from death in order to identify a new living dead man, a new sacred man.

(Agamben, 1998:131)

[...] even though the camp originally emerged (in the Nazi period) as an exceptional space in which the life of the inmate was violently transformed into bare life, the production of homo sacer is today extended beyond the walls of the concentration camp.

(Diken, 2005: 317-318)

The previous chapter has drawn on an analysis of Shatila itself by looking at its politico-juridical structure as well as its evolution as a space of exception from its establishment in 1949 until the present day. However, given the protracted refugeeness of the Palestinians in Lebanon and elsewhere as well as the prolonged existence of their spaces of reference, this chapter adopts a slightly different approach in order to shed some light on the meaning of the camp today and on how biopolitical concerns affect different

subjectivities in Lebanon. By drawing on some conclusions on his study of the camp and biopolitics in Western democracies, Agamben (1998: 181-182) once said:

> Today it is not the city but rather the camp that is the fundamental biopolitical paradigm of the West [...] [This thesis] throws a sinister light on the models by which social sciences, sociology, urban studies, and architecture today are trying to conceive and organise the public space of the world's cities without any clear awareness that at the very center lies the same bare life (even if it has been transformed and rendered apparently more human) that defined the biopolitics of the great totalitarian states of the twentieth century.

Certainly we are not in the context of twentieth century totalitarian Western states, but is it entirely true that the camp, and the camp only, could be the paradigmatic spatial device that divides the life worth living from the expendable life? What happens when the space of the camp begins overlapping with the space of the city? What if urban theorists and planners are no longer able to divide bare life from the 'citizen', the one supposed to be protected and taken care of? Questioning temporariness and isolation – main features of refugee camps at least at the moment of their establishment – becomes therefore crucial.

As statistics of United Nations High Commission for Refugees (UNHCR) show, the refugee population around the world excluding the Palestinians and amounting to some 10.5 million does not live exclusively in refugee camps. UNHCR (2010) estimates that more than half of them reside in urban areas and that only less than one third actually live in refugee camps (see also Agier, 2011: 36-37). It seems that the refugee population is more dispersed than sociologists or biopolitics theorists would expect them to be. Hence, the urgency is to look not only at the refugee in different terms, but to also look at the camp itself through different lenses and in a less generalised way. Though collecting statistics concerning the Palestinian refugees in Lebanon seems problematic as they inhabit zones of indistinction also in terms of their juridical status in the country (see Chapter 3), one of the most revealing datum regarding their presence is that only about fifty percent of

them live in the camps.[1] Secondly, if this datum is compared with others in the rest of UNRWA's fields of operations, we can see how Lebanon, along with Gaza, constitutes a sort of exception as it holds a sad record in terms of the highest number of refugees living in the camps. This means that life in the refugee camp does not constitute the norm as regard the Palestinian refugee condition.

But there are other signs that urge us to adopt a rather different approach from the one proposed by Agamben. The camp is certainly established to separate the refugees from the citizens, but how does the passing of time affect the camp physicality and the inhabitants' relation with its outside? The peculiar urban location of Shatila, at the crossroads of the city and the countryside, urges us to question the role of the camp. According to unofficial UNRWA statistics, today about thirty percent of the camp population is constituted by non-Palestinians and includes Lebanese, Syrians, Egyptians, and Gypsies among others.[2] Given this relatively high presence of 'foreigners' in the camp, how might we conceive of the refugee camp today? What can we say about its inhabitants and, as a consequence, the kind of biopolitics at stake in Lebanon? Is it still a Palestinian space? Is it still a refugee camp, a temporary settlement for those awaiting the return? Biopolitical lenses reproducing and celebrating the citizen/alien dichotomy must be reconsidered as we can no longer assume that the space of the camp is exclusively a refugee space.

It is important to highlight the fact that such a high presence of non-Palestinians in the camp is not recorded in other camps in Lebanon, or at least not with such significance. However, Shatila's urban location leads us to inevitably consider the relationship between the camp and the city and the impact and influences that these two spaces might have on each other. In order to capture the function of the refugee camp today, Shatila is considered in its temporal and spatial relations. A relational approach proves crucial. On the one hand, refugee camps are increasingly becoming permanent solutions abandoning in this way their temporary character. On the other, it is precisely this protraction of temporariness that leads to their potential transformation and the change of relations with its outside.

Certainly investigating refugees in urban contexts is not a new move. In her research on Hutu refugees in camps in Western Tanzania and refugees in townships, Malkki (1995b) showed how location might have a different impact in the construction of

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[1] According to UNRWA only 226,533 refugees out of 425,640 registered in Lebanon live inside the official 12 refugee camps (www.unwa.org as on July 2010).

[2] UNRWA operational file 'Shatila Camp' obtained at the UNRWA headquarters in Beirut during fieldwork.

the identity and everyday life experiences and perceptions. But what happens when the camp is actually located in the city and when such a distinction between urban refugees living outside the camp and refugees living in camps can no longer be drawn? Who are the inhabitants of the camps and their neighbours?

As Doraï (2007, 2008, 2010) has recently pointed out, the evolution of the refugee camps and their potential transformation into city-like structures have been partially neglected (see also Al-Qutub, 1989; Hanafi, 2008b; 2010b). One of the pioneers of this approach has been French anthropologist Michel Agier (2002, 2004, 2008, 2011; see also Perouse De Montclos and Kagwajna, 2000) who examined refugee camps in Kenya through the prism of the city. To Agier (2011: 186), in fact, '[f]rom spaces of transit and waiting, some [camps] organise themselves into "towns" despite not being endowed with an urban project inasmuch as everything is designed not to last'. In contrast with a literature that looks at the camp *per se*, I instead argue that the urban perspective should also encourage us to look at networks and connections that with the time are developed and bind the camp to the city. I do not suggest that the camp is fully integrated into the dynamics of the city. Rather, I argue that the camp is still located in the 'space of exception' though, as I later discuss, it is an expanded version of the exception that might not include the refugee only.

In this chapter I examine the development of Shatila to identify urban or semi-urban fabrics inside the camp and to uncover the relation of the camp and its inhabitants with the surrounding environment. While reflecting on the meaning of the camp and biopolitics today, the chapter is divided into three main sections. The first section offers a historical account that considers the process of uncontrolled urbanisation in Beirut and the creation of areas of urban informalities since the 1950s. It examines the economic and political reasons that led many Lebanese to leave the countryside to find fortune in Beirut.

The second part of the chapter explores the ways in which biopolitical concerns operate in Lebanon. While exploring what kind of exception is applied in Lebanon, I question whether national belonging and citizenship constitute the exclusive discriminatory factors that lead to the exclusion of some subjects. It is shown how Lebanese citizens, neglected by their own government, end up sharing the Palestinian refugees' conditions and living in the camps or their proximity. The exception is not limited to rights and citizenship, but expands from the camp and the body of the refugees to include different kinds of 'banned': from the deprived Lebanese to the illegal immigrants and poor foreigners. As the exception is applied to different subjects, geographically it also exceeds

the camp boundaries to produce what I call 'campscape'. Borrowing Arjun Appadurai's (1996) understanding of modernity as well as rephrasing Zygmunt Bauman's (2000) metaphor of 'liquidity', this section argues that the camp has increasingly become fluid as the exception exceeds the boundaries of the refugees' spaces and bodies to include the citizens as well as the areas surrounding the camp.

The last part of the chapter looks again at the space of the camp itself. While the previous sections will have explored the new composition of the camp and the surrounding environment, this final part reconsiders the camp as a closed space. To further investigate how the relations binding the camp to the city affect the refugees' perception of their space, it is shown how despite good relations holding together Palestinians and non-Palestinians, the exceptionality of the camp is maintained by the same Palestinians as strategy of resistance waiting for the implementation of their right of return.

The camp meets the city:
The production of Beirut's 'misery belt'

The reasons that led the country to the civil war were not only ideological and sectarian (see Chapter 4). While these factors greatly contributed to the outbreak of violence, other economic and social aspects such as the high rates of inequalities dividing the Lebanese body prepared the ground for the long lasting conflict. In his reconsideration of the history of modern Lebanon, Traboulsi (2007) analyses partially overlooked economic and social factors and, in so doing, highlights some thorns in the side that the country has yet to solve. Traboulsi agrees that the eruption of the war in Lebanon must be sought in the sectarian system. Yet, what previous analyses on the civil war had to some extent neglected was the role of the sects in establishing an 'enlarged clientelist networks designed to resist the inequalities of the market and compete for its benefits and for the appropriation of social wealth and services of the state' (p. viii). While the institutionalisation of the confessional system came with the French Mandate (1920-1943), the seeds for such a sectarian, economic and political structure were deposited since the early Ottoman domination when different communities began confronting each other over political and socio-economic privileges in the old autonomous province of Mount Lebanon that hosted mainly Druze and Christian communities (see also Salibi, 1965,1988).

With the Mandate and the artificial creation of Greater Lebanon (1921) that annexed the present day provinces of the South, the North, the Bekaa Valley on the east, and the coastal towns of Beirut, Saida, Tyre and Tripoli to the old province of Mount Lebanon, inequalities separating the rich from the poor were exacerbated as taxation coming from the newly annexed territories was mainly spent on the old province of Mount Lebanon (Traboulsi, 2007: 81). Under the pressure of the French, banking and trading soon became the most flourishing activities at the expense of the agricultural and industrial sectors. As the tertiary sector was highly developed and run by merchants, the newborn bourgeoisie deeply connected with the Mandate authorities. With the formal independence of the country in 1943, the Lebanese presidency, held by the Maronite community, became 'the main pole of attraction for the country's dominant economic interests' as all the main business of the country was controlled by some thirty families pivoting around the figure of Bechara Al-Khouri, the first Lebanese president (p. 115). Therefore, the main economic activities were directed and controlled by the Christian sects, in particular the Maronites, leaving the Muslims, in particular the Shi'ites, in an inferior position. Members of this oligarchy controlled all economic activities: from the banks and agricultural and industrial production to the whole service system comprising transport, water and electricity companies. But this power was not limited to the economic sphere as with the profits coming from all these activities, the oligarchy entered the political arena by financing political lists and running for posts in the government and parliament to maintain and increase their power and monopolies. The corruption of the system was manifested also by the president himself as, instead of separating politics from economics, further entwined them protecting the economic interests of the few at the expense of the disadvantaged.

While Lebanon in the period soon after its independence knew an unprecedented economic growth, the benefits were not distributed equally as profits tended to be concentrated in Beirut and in the area of Mount Lebanon exacerbating sectarian inequalities and divisions. Beside these internal causes, the division of present day South Lebanon from present day Israel and Occupied Territories at the hands of the mandated powers of France and Britain, along with the birth of Israel in 1948, represented a huge blow for the rural population of the newly annexed southern provinces (Sfeir, 2008: 59-71). Because of the boycott of Israel by the Arab states, the production that previously was destined to Palestine was suddenly cut and agricultural and industrial activities could not rely on Western markets only since 'the value of its export to Palestine was greater than its export to France, Great Britain and the US combined' (Traboulsi, 2007: 113). The only

exception to this economic crisis was represented by the city of Beirut that substituted Haifa, as main port for the Arab hinterland, and soon became the centre for communications and transports linking the West to the Arab hinterland.

The development of Beirut as the financial district of the Middle East that started under the auspices of the French in the first half of the twentieth century was therefore continuing at the expense of the countryside. No investment was undertaken in favour of the agricultural sector and farmers slowly began succumbing to the rampant capitalist system. While Beirut was taken care of through plans aimed at improving its infrastructure, its road and transportation systems, investments in real estate and in the construction and service sectors, the Lebanese of the rural areas were left with no services. In the 1960s the south still had no running water, electricity, hospitals and schools as even basic services were a luxury for the few. The country's liberal economic system reserved just 0.7 percent of state budget for the South inhabited by twenty percent of the whole country's population (Sayigh, 1994: 162). Despite some timid attempts to reform the system supporting the agricultural and industrial sectors and the provision of services in the remote areas of the country under the presidency of Gen. Fouad Chehab (1958-1964), projects and plans were never completed as they were opposed and rejected by the oligarchy not ready to lose its privileges to improve the condition of the deprived (Sayigh, 1994; Traboulsi, 2007).

It is in this climate that at the beginning of the 1950s waves of Lebanese left their homes in search of fortune and better conditions in Beirut as well as other coastal cities, though the latter to a lesser extent. The urbanisation of the country was of such explosive and uncontrollable proportions that migrants began pouring into the periphery of the capital punctuated by former Armenian refugee camps and neighbourhoods, as well as Palestinian refugee camps (Salibi, 1976: 7-10). What was later called the 'Beirut misery belt' seemed to follow an axis drawn around the capital along a line starting in the eastern part of city from the former Armenian camp of Medawar in Quarantina, proceeding towards the Palestinian camps of Tell El-Zaatar, Jisr El-Basha and Dbayeh and stretching towards the western part of Beirut to include the camps of Shatila, Mar Elias and Burj El-Barajneh. The explosion of informal settlements made villages around the capital become the natural extension of its centre while camps, not isolated any longer, began touching the city. Shatila camp, for example, was quite isolated from the centre of Beirut when it was established in 1949 (see Figure 3).

Figure 3: Shatila camp, early 1950s. ANERA Archives (in Peteet 2005: 8).

At the time it seemed clear where the refugee camp started and ended. Yet, the explosive urbanisation of Beirut made the city touch the camp as informal settlements and the Beirut misery belt seem constituting the threshold where the camp meets the city. While the UN's maps still represent Shatila as an isolated space (see Figure 4), the UN's imaginations seem not to reflect the reality on the ground as satellite images show the entanglement of the camp with the city (see Figures 5 and 6 that show Shatila's locations today).

Figure 4: UNRWA map of Shatila camp, UNRWA Lebanon Field Office (Undated), obtained at the agency's headquarters (Beirut).
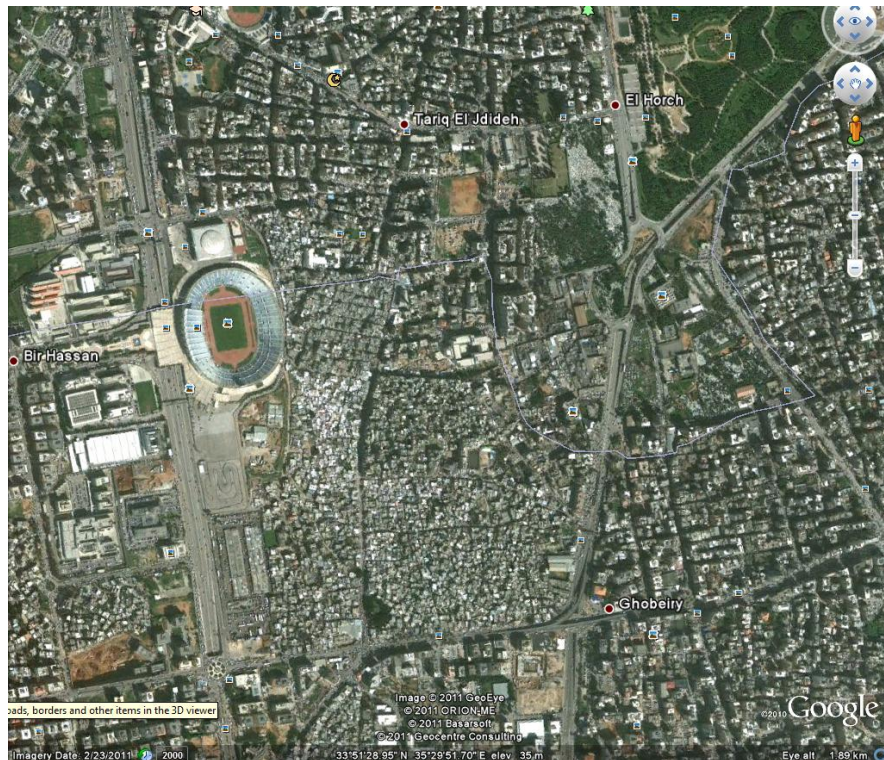
Figure 5: Google Earth Image (2011) representing the area of the southern suburb of Beirut that includes Shatila camp.
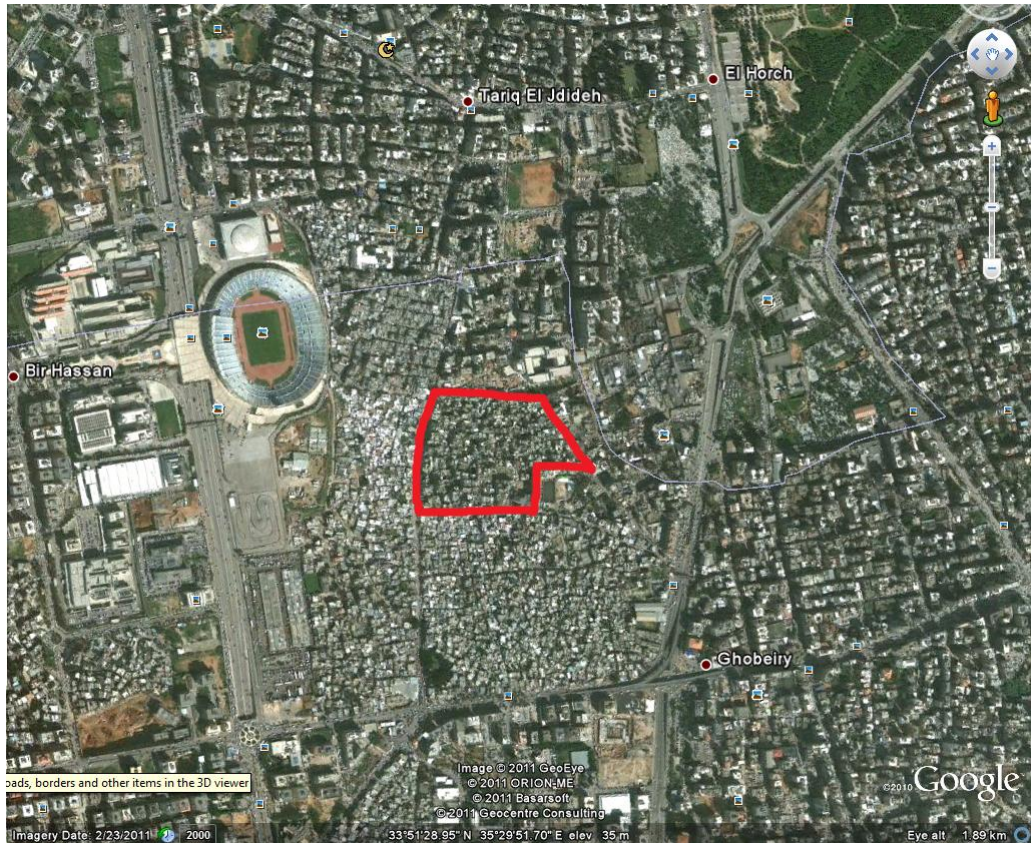
Figure 6: Adaptation of Google Earth image (2011) with Shatila (boundaries of the camp are in red).

The concentration of informal settlements in areas with a high presence and density of refugee communities is not limited to the period following the 1950s. Beirut refugee camps and neighbourhoods had welcomed rural migrants in other occasions too as Armenian and Syriac camps established in the 1920s in the eastern part of the city became the first poles of attractions for those in need of cheap accommodation (see Fawaz and Peillen, 2002). Even when Armenian refugees began abandoning their camps, this did not lead to the eradication of Medawar camp in the quarter of Qarantina. On the contrary, spaces emptied by the Armenians were soon filled by Lebanese leaving the countryside and foreign migrants such as Kurds and Syrians. As the Armenian refugees camps provided shelters for other kinds of migrants, so did and still do the Palestinian refugee camps of the capital as migrants settle within their boundaries or in their proximity. As the camp of Tell El-Zaatar in the eastern part of Beirut 'by 1974 had extended over five times beyond its original size' (Fawaz and Peillen, 2002: 13), especially after the Cairo Agreement (1969) the lands around Shatila in Western Beirut began being populated by new comers that included Palestinians and Lebanese citizens. Although officially refugee

camps cannot expand, the quarters of Sabra and Hay Gharbeh, respectively north and west of the camp, became the natural extension of Shatila (Clerc-Huybrechts, 2008: 180). The presence of services such as health care and job offers, provided by the Palestinian organisations and open to anyone in need, also contributed to the growth of the area and informal settlements around the camp. As Shwayri (2008: 78-79) argues, there is no coincidence that the refugee camps and shantytowns develop in such proximities. While they have distinct physical forms and legally are to be distinguished, 'they both came about through similar processes of struggle during the Independence era and up to 1982'.

As Fawaz and Peillen (2002) suggest, the north-eastern part of the 'misery belt' attracted those in search of jobs in the industrial sector while the western side constituted an appealing destination as the construction sector was developing around major projects such as the Sport City Stadium, Beirut International Airport and the Gulf Club most of them initiated and completed during the presidency of Camille Chamoun (1952-1958). As urban planning focused on the realisation of luxurious residential areas, on the eve of the civil war some 40,000 to 50,000 high standard apartments in the whole Beirut were left empty while the demand of low-cost housing was never satisfied (Clerc-Huybrechts, 2008: 42, Trabousli, 2007: 160). While luxury apartments were left unused, migrants from the countryside and those fleeing the south because of Israeli retaliatory attacks settled in the suburbs violating norms of construction, land allotment and private properties (Clerc-Huybrechts, 2008). Despite some timid attempts to improve the condition of areas where informal settlements developed, no low-cost housing plan was ever implemented (Rowe and Sarkis 1998: 15). By the early 1970s the inhabitants of the shantytowns were mostly, although not exclusively, Shi'ites economically and socially marginalised. While well before the civil war the southern part of Beirut was a mixed area, during the 1960s became particularly populated by the Shi'a communities that, forced to leave the south because of lack of services and growing Israeli retaliatory operations, ended up constituting twenty-two percent of population of metropolitan Beirut. Forced to share the same neglected and forgotten urban spaces, poor Lebanese and the Palestinians also shared the feeling of abandonment and vulnerability. It is in this context that the camps and the slum became 'spaces of struggle' as social and economic solidarity turned into political and military alliances during the war (Shwayri, 2008: 78; Salibi, 1976: 10). Overcrowding situations, squatting, poor sanitation and health conditions, scarcity of supplies such as water and electricity rendered these areas 'breeding grounds' for parties in Lebanon ready to confront militarily (Traboulsi, 2007: 162). It is also in these conditions of extreme deprivation and

neglect that violence erupted on different levels. While ideological differences on Lebanese identity and foreign policy loaded the gun, the deprivation of certain layers of society pulled the trigger for a conflict that lasted for over fifteen years.

Campscapes and the 'floating' exception

What kind of biopolitics in Lebanon?

Though the civil war certainly did not spare any confession or nationality – whether Lebanese or Palestinians – important reflections need to be made as regards what kind of biopolitics is at stake in the country. If by biopolitics we mean the production of bare life as a result of a legal abandonment at first glance the Palestinian refugees and the refugee camps reflect the logic of exclusion as depicted by Agamben (1995a, 1998). Stateless and having to rely on humanitarian aid and informal economies, their presence is also rendered invisible in the official realm of politics and law. In the context of the nation-state system, Agamben has shown how today democracies' first task is that of constantly defining who can be included and who is to be excluded from the protection that the sovereign can grant. However, as the opening quote of the chapter suggests, the definition of this threshold must constantly be redefined.

As regards the Palestinians, not all of them were treated the same way. Not all of them were forced to live in refugee camps and certainly not all of them were prevented integration into Lebanese society and economy. The particular sectarian system of the country, in this sense, led to a well planned fragmentation of the Palestinian body as exclusion seemed to not run on national belonging tracks only. Along with national and non-national distinctions, sectarian and class patterns have also guided spatial, social and political distinctions. Responding to the capitalist forces and political interests was one of the main considerations in the adoption of policies geared at including some Palestinians while excluding some others.

A different case from the one depicted most of the times in studies regarding the Palestinians in Lebanon is in fact represented by the Palestinian middle and urban classes that moved to neighbouring Arab countries well before the proclamation of the state of Israel (May 1948) when civil violence began escalating in Palestine. Upper and middle class Palestinian families in most cases had properties and real estate in urban centres of

neighbouring Arab countries and huge amount of capital were, therefore, transferred to what later became their new countries of residence (Brand, 1988b). In the context of Lebanon, government's policies tended to divide the Palestinian body according to patterns that would have guaranteed some profits in economic terms and advantages in the political arena. The most well-to-do Palestinians, especially the Christians, were allowed to settle in the cities and integrate themselves into Lebanese society while their capital could be absorbed and invested in new business and companies (El-Natour, 1993; Hudson, 1997; Sayigh, 1988; Sfeir, 2008). Thanks to their money and wealth, upper class Palestinians even managed to bypass 'legal obstacles' preventing other refugees from practicing their occupational vocations as they began working as doctors and engineers. Compared to those coming from the rural context, urban class Palestinians were more educated and having worked for British mandate authorities managed to find better opportunities and jobs with new established British and American oil companies in Lebanon. As El-Natour (1993: 65-67) suggests, these Palestinians offered an invaluable contribution to the economy of their host country. One of the most successful figures was Youssef Beidis who funded the Intra Bank in 1965, had shares with the Middle East Airline – Lebanese airline company – the port companies and Phoenicia and Hilton hotels in downtown Beirut. The confessionalisation of the Palestinian body became even more obvious as some Christian Palestinians were encouraged to obtain the Lebanese citizenship in the government's attempt to counterbalance the rampant demographic growth of the Muslim population. From the 1950s until the 1970s, some 28,000 Christians obtained the Lebanese citizenship while the Muslims could obtain it as long as they paid lawyers and only in the case in which they were able to prove their Lebanese origins (El-Natour, 1993: 42; Sayigh, 1994: 23).

However, while the upper class Palestinians enjoyed citizenship and the acceptance in society mainly thanks to their capital or sectarian identity, the majority of the refugees came from a rural background (Sayigh, 2007). Having lost their homes and means of livelihood in 1948, these Palestinians could not find any other solution than living in the refugee camps established at the time by the Red Cross, UNRWA and the Lebanese government (see Chapter 5). Although most of the Palestinians in the country experienced a multilayered discrimination that translated into social, economic and spatial marginalisation, if we look at the microcosm of the refugee camp in Shatila, those well-connected with some Lebanese or those coming from important families that for one

reason or another decided to settle in the camp or its proximities had less problems than the 'ordinary' refugee.

The story of Muhammad, a Palestinian refugee living right beyond the official boundary of Shatila, is quite indicative. Fleeing Palestine with the family when he was just a teenager, he spent one year or so in the south of Lebanon until 1950 when, thanks to the family's wealth, he had the opportunity to move with his family to Beirut and buy a flat. The father was a Mukhtar, the head of the village of origin in the North Galilee. His family was well known and respected in Palestine and had acquaintances in the Lebanese capital even before the Nakba. Though in the end his family decided to move in the proximity of the camp as most of the people they knew resided in Shatila, Muhammad tells how he managed to build his house outside the official boundaries:

> They asked my father to come and live next to the camp since they are old and cannot walk all the way through every time they want to visit him. But they were living in tents. We could not live in tents. So my father asked M. A. to get him building permission. A. brought some 5,000 bricks and told my father to start building. [...] I started the construction and the police came to stop me [...] I went to M. A. to complain. So he called the chief of the police and asked him to come.. He introduced me as the son of the Agha M.[3] and after that the policemen themselves helped us building the house for free.[4]

While the case of Muhammad is not isolated, other Palestinians have mentioned that having good relations with the Lebanese could lead to some advantages. As Hadi, another Palestinian I met in Shatila, tells the story of how his family slowly improved their houses transforming the tent into a solid construction when the Lebanese authorities left the camp in 1969, he admits that some people managed to use cement and concrete well before

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[3] 'Agha' is an important title that dates back to the Ottoman Empire and it was given to either civil or military leaders. Although Palestine was under the Bristish Mandate when Muhammad's father was the Mukhtar, he was given this title so as to stress his importance as the guide of the village.

[4] Muhammad, Shatila area, 14 November 2008. Interview conducted in Arabic. For anonymity purposes names have been removed.

others, as he says that 'there were some exceptions of course, some people were close to the authorities or married to Lebanese.. those people were an exception'.[5]

Muhammad's and Hadi's accounts show how good relations with host authorities could have eased restrictions and problems faced by the majority of ordinary refugees. Although some might argue that, despite his strong acquaintances Muhammad did not manage to improve his life much, building a house in concrete in Shatila at the beginning of the 1950s must be considered a significant achievement that was prevented to the rest of the refugee population.

It seems therefore that national belonging was a primary, but not exclusive, discriminatory factor in the Lebanese policies' attempt to separate the Palestinians from the Lebanese nationals. Confessional and financial patterns, as well as good connections, were constantly and arbitrarily applied in order to divide those worth protecting and integrating from those whose exclusion was essential. If we broaden the scope of enquiry to include an investigation of other categories of people residing in the country, we might see how and to what extent the Lebanese economic and political system played a significant role in the *caesura* dividing not only the Palestinian body, but also the same Lebanese community. If we extend the concept of biopolitics distancing its definition from Agamben's understanding and include other forms of abandonment and exclusion, the Palestinian refugees in Lebanon are not the only 'banned'. Today, since the end of the civil war more than twenty-five percent of the Lebanese population 'lives below the poverty line', while '25.8 percent of individuals [...] in Beirut earn less than US$106/month' (Fawaz and Peillen, 2002: 4). Though we can argue that the abandonment works on economic and social lines and has certainly been aggravated by the years of war leading to massive displacement and destruction, looking at the root of the Lebanese citizenship would illustrate how economic and sectarian concerns have always taken the upper hand in the decision-making process that shaped Lebanon as state and its population.

Maps, statistics and censuses are not objective, but help to produce the population and 'to construct [… it] in a particular manner that is not naturally given' (Campbell, 1998a: 79). As Maktabi (1999) explains, the 1932 census was crucial as it paved the way to a precise definition of who had to be included or excluded from the Lebanese citizenship. Moreover, as the Maronite community constituted the demographic majority according to the census, the presidency of the republic, the most important post in the executive, was

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[5] Hadi, Shatila, 23 December 2008. Interview conducted in Arabic.

reserved to the Maronites. The analysis of the methods with which the data of the 1932 census were obtained, however, helps in reconsidering and questioning the ways in which Lebanese citizenship was shaped as the census itself became highly politicised and contested. Discrepancies between the first census of 1921 and the one of 1932 had the purpose to change the ways in which citizenship could be granted, and along with it, the right to vote. While the 1921 statistics had only an administrative purpose, Resolution 2825 issued in 1924 determined that all the former Ottoman subjects residing in Greater Lebanon as on 30 August 1924 – date of issue of the resolution – would have become Lebanese citizens. As Maktabi stresses, the presence on territory was the essential requirement.

However, these provisions changed some years later in 1931 when a new census was about to recount the Lebanese residing in Lebanon as well as include the emigrant population that was not considered previously. While many residents in Lebanon were denied citizenship after the 1932 census because they lacked proper documentation proving their residence there since generations, and most of whom were Muslim, priority was granted to Christians either emigrants living elsewhere or newly arrived such as the Armenians fleeing persecutions in Turkey. Christian communities were definitively favoured at the expenses of their Muslim counterparts as Kurdish refugees, mostly Muslim, were never granted the same rights of the Armenians, Chaldeans or members of other Christian sects that settled in Lebanon only later on. Therefore, while on the one hand the inclusion of mainly Muslim areas to the old province of Mount Lebanon during the Mandate increased the demographic significance of the Muslim communities, on the other, the census rebalanced those threatening statistics with the aim of maintaining the Christian supremacy. Yet, as distinctions are never drawn once and for all, boundaries of inclusion and exclusion are constantly produced. What once was included formally – those having acquired the Lebanese citizenship by virtue of birth – could be excluded informally later on through an act of political and economical abandonment. A complex redefinition of the threshold separating the one protected by the sovereign and the one abandoned must therefore be reworked on economic, political and social lines.

The previous section has shown how entering the space of the city does not yet mean achieving a 'qualified' and political life as the abandonment of some subjects and areas demonstrates. While officially Lebanese nationals are protected by their state, unofficially the sectarian and neoliberal system of the country prevents them from enjoying not only their rights as citizens, but also their rights as human beings entitled to a dignified

life. It is no wonder that refugee populations and the less taken care of among the Lebanese might end up living in and sharing the same spaces. In our encounter in Sabra, Fadi, a Lebanese man married to a Palestinian, told me his story of coexistence and solidarity with the Palestinians as he was born in Shatila.[6] His account shows how difficult and problematic it is to draw the boundary between him and his neighbours. This is not only because he married a Palestinian and even joined the resistance in Fatah ranks, but also because being Palestinian or Lebanese seemed not to make much difference. Not in social and economic terms, as some Lebanese and Palestinians share the same condition. Not in the political value of his family's and his own life as he lost his father during the massacre of Sabra and Shatila in 1982. Sharing the same spaces and conditions blurred national boundaries that allegedly separate the refugee from the citizen. In that circumstance, the life of Lebanese who were living side by side with the Palestinians became expendable and killable too (see Chapter 5).

Fadi's is a story of Lebanese-Palestinian solidarity and mutual support. Growing up among the Palestinians, fighting with the Palestinian resistance and benefitting from the Palestinian services, he also regrets the deterioration of the relations especially after the civil war. Praising the importance of the Palestinian institutional presence in Lebanon (see Chapter 4), he thinks that 'the Lebanese realised what they lost after the resistance left in 1982.. they felt neglected [again]'.[7] He also remembers how after the war began, the population around the camp began increasing exponentially as Palestinians as well as Lebanese Muslim escaped the siege of the camps of East Beirut in 1976 (Fawaz and Peillen, 2002: 16). About 200,000 people migrated from East Beirut as Palestinians and Lebanese Muslims squatted in West Beirut and the camp proximity (p. 2, see also Khalaf, 1998). The context of the civil war led in fact to an 'unprecedented increase in illegal construction and unregulated growth' as people kept on escaping dangerous areas where their sectarian identity might have led them to death (Salam, 1998: 130).

The sectarianisation of attempted reconstruction projects made explicit the privileges reserved to certain citizens and not others as during the 1980s the distribution of funds for reconstruction reflected the interests of the presidency. Maronite enclaves were privileged over the overcrowded southern suburb of the city hosting mainly Muslims, and over the south of the country whose agricultural production and means of livelihood were destroyed by repeated Israeli attacks and invasions. As Sayigh (1994: 135) maintains, in

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[6] Fadi, Sabra, 26 December 2008. Interview conducted in Arabic.
[7] Ibid.

metropolitan Beirut inequalities in the reconstructions were expressed by the distribution of funds. After 1982 the government allocated LL100 million for a new sewage system in the region of North Metn housing some 150,000 people while only LL30million for the southern suburbs with some 700,000 inhabitants.

The end of the hostilities did not lead to major improvements in the government policies as inequalities were not reduced and the centre of Beirut, once the heart of the country's economy, was given priority over other areas that remained neglected (among others Gavin, 1998). While major efforts were put in the heavily contested reconstruction of the financial district to attract foreign investment by providing an economically stable facade of the country, the rehabilitation of the suburbs and its inhabitants has yet to be completed as it seems that low-cost housing has never been provided and as displaced keep on solving their accommodation needs by increasing the world of the informalities in the city (Salam, 1998).

In Lebanon, it seems that biopolitical concerns do not run along national or citizenship tracks only. Political and economic struggles over power and resources radicalised positions and exacerbated inequalities along both sectarian and economic lines as testified by the lack of investment in certain areas. Primary distinctions, that are based on law and rights – therefore citizenship – are made along national belonging that separates the Palestinians from the Lebanese. Secondary distinctions cut through the very Palestinian and Lebanese bodies. Sectarian, political and economic interests produce other outcasts as neoliberal policies complete distinctions through a process of socio-economic abandonment and by translating this ban geographically. While the camp is the spatial device that contains the threat and separates the refugee from the citizen, this technology of power may lose its effectiveness and function over time. As refugee camps and informal settlements develop in such proximity, the camp boundaries increasingly blur as the refugee meets the citizen.

Liquid camps and blurred boundaries in south Beirut

Bare life in Beirut is not represented by the Palestinian refugees only as boundaries separating the camp from its outside and the centre from the informal settlements can no longer be drawn easily. As clear-cut fences do not exist, new 'disjunctive orders' and spatial models are imposed. Rather than looking at the camp, all this time we might have been looking at a 'campscape'. As Appardurai (1996: 33) suggests:

> [t]he suffix –*scape* allows us to point to the fluid, irregular shapes
> [...] These terms with the common suffix -*scape* also indicate that
> these are not objectively given relations that look the same from
> every angle of vision but, rather, that they are deeply perspectival
> constructs, inflected by the historical, linguistic, and political
> situatedness of different sorts of actors: nation-states,
> multinationals, diasporic communities, as well as subnational
> groupings and movements (whether religious, political, or
> economic), and even intimate face-to-face groups, such as villages,
> neighbourhoods, and families.

The suffix –scape gives the idea of fluidity, of something elastic. It indicates dispersal and non-static boundaries. The notion of campscape seems to better render the image of what is the refugee camp today in its relation with its surroundings as the exception has transcended the camp's shape.

Although this understanding of the camp of Shatila applies today, in the aftermath of the civil war and for the early 1990s, the presence of checkpoints around the camp seemed to re-impose spatial differences and separations. Reconstruction of Palestinian spaces was highly regulated and restricted as in the early 1990s the presence of checkpoints was aimed at controlling this process and at preventing the camp from expanding horizontally or beyond its boundaries (Peteet, 2005: 172-173). Nonetheless, with the financial support and help provided by UNRWA households were slowly rebuilt and repaired to accommodate the ever increasing population of the camp. Since construction was prohibited outside the camp, the expansion of the site occurred vertically as if the camp suddenly turned again into a closed and well demarcated space because of the presence of Lebanese and Syrian checkpoints at the entrances.[8] While during the 1980s houses were a maximum of two floors high, today the camp environment has significantly changed as inhabitants are forced to build upwards to five or six floors, each floor constituting one household. The construction aspect of the camp follows its own logic and

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[8] For the involvement of Syrian troops in the control of the camps during and in the aftermath of the civil war, see Chapter 5.

pattern as flats are built one on the top of the other in order to accommodate all members of the family, spouses and children included, usually occupying the entire building.[9]

However, as during the 1990s checkpoints began to slowly disappear, the removal of controls rendered movements inside and outside the camp much easier. Today the difference between the actual camp and its outside is barely perceptible as many Palestinians also live outside Shatila's official boundaries. No fence ever surrounded Shatila and, as it appears today, the camp has only one net on its northern side with multiple points of access. The rest of the camp is open and boundaries are represented by streets that are wider than the narrow alleys within it (see Figure 6). It is precisely this openness and lack of controls that facilitated the increase of the camp population. Beyond those Palestinians or Lebanese that have always been living in the camp, the newcomers are represented by three categories of people: those who came to live in the camp as internally displaced refugees of the civil war, mainly Palestinians as the camps of Nabatieh, Tell El-Zaatar and Jisr El-Basha have never been reconstructed; Palestinians and Lebanese who moved to Beirut in search of better jobs opportunities; and Lebanese and other non-Palestinians who are so poor that could not find any cheaper accommodation. Today, in fact, the camp is not inhabited by Palestinians only because out of a population of about 12,000 to 13,000 people, unofficial UNRWA statistics estimate that some thirty percent of the camp population is non-Palestinian including Lebanese, Syrians, Egyptians and other Arab and non-Arab nationalities.[10]

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[9] Insights from various interviews conducted during the fieldwork in Shatila.

[10] UNRWA operational file 'Shatila Camp' obtained at UNRWA headquarters in Beirut during fieldwork.

Figure 7: Shatila's boundary. Photo taken from the Palestinian Civil Rights Campaign website (Undated), available at www.palestinecivilrightscampaign.org/gallery.html (last accessed October 2011).

With the increase and diversification of the camp population, today the housing patterns inside the camp are changing as not all the buildings host one family only. Constructions in the camp still reflect its vertical tension as the person interested in building must ask permission to the owner of the top flat. Usually this permission is given as for the owner of the upper floor, this constitutes a one time income equal to 2,000 – 3,000 US dollars. The roof of the top flat is therefore turned into the floor of the new house and in this way the construction process can continue.[11] But for Palestinians and non-Palestinians moving to the camp there is also the option of renting a room or an entire house or to buy the property. Although officially these kinds of transactions are not allowed in the camp as refugees do not own the land on which the camp was established, these are to be seen as a further development of informal and more flexible economies that allow the population of the camp to make some profit and the newcomers to find a cheaper and affordable accommodation. As Doraï (2010) explains in his analyses of Mar Elias refugee camp (Beirut) and the urban dynamics in which the camp is embroiled, the practices of renting and selling houses inside the camp is an attractive option for many Palestinians that so far are still prevented from working in Lebanon. To compensate for the lack of income, they build more floors on the top of their roofs and rent to new Palestinian residents or immigrants for some $100-150 a month in this way competing with other more

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[11] Insights from interview with Salah, Shatila, 17 November 2008. Interview conducted in Arabic.

expensive areas of Beirut and 'playing' with the exception. Also Hanadi's (2008) study on the situation of the Burj El-Barajneh camp (metropolitan Beirut) reveals the new role played by refugee spaces in the context of the city and neoliberal economies. From a space in which the alien is kept far from the national body, the refugee camp turns into a space that welcomes all the categories of people banned from the qualified life of the city.

Because of their prolonged existence, refugee camps of Beirut seem to lose their temporary character and to become more permanent solution that host refugees as well as other outcasts of the Lebanese system. On the one hand, this permanency is also materialised through the utilisation of solid materials such as cement for the constructions. On the other, the logic of emergency typical of refugee spaces or urban informalities keeps on surviving through the lack of planning. As in between temporariness and permanency, refugee camps today inhabit 'a "frozen transience", an ongoing, lasting state of temporariness, a duration patched together by moments none of which is lived through as an element of, and a contribution to, perpetuity' (Bauman, 2002: 345). Yet, the high percentage represented by the non-refugee population in Shatila leads us to consider the camp under a different light.

As Nigel Thrift (2006) reminds us, space must be addressed as a process and not as a frozen materiality. It is never static, but is always in constant motion and fluid. Hence, even in the refugee camp understood as the permanent spatialisation of the exception we witness a development and evolution not only of its mere physical features, but also assist to the change of its function and use. In this sense the camp could be seen as a space in potentiality (Agamben, 1999). It can become a space of abjection in the Agambenian understanding and, therefore, a technology of power aimed at the elimination of the biological threat as it happened with the concentration camps in Nazi Germany. But this potential actualisation and transformation into a death factory is only one among other possibilities. The camp can also turn into other more positive and productive spaces. The ways in which the camp can transform and develop are 'decided' by the sovereign, but along with him, by the context, circumstances and the people acting on, inhabiting or surrounding it.

As regards the Palestinian refugee camps in Lebanon and in particular the camps that are today part of metropolitan Beirut, I argue that the state of exception is still permanent (see Chapter 5). However, what is excepted changes over time and circumstances as Shatila, like other camps in the city, welcomes different kinds of banned and the 'human waste' of the Lebanese system. The camp is, therefore, converted into a

space that not only provides cheap solutions for those who cannot afford to live anywhere else in the city, but can also provide a safe haven for those who need to hide and remain in the shadow. As discussed in the previous chapter, this latter point has serious implications in terms of criminality's safe islands because of the Lebanese authorities' lack of control of Palestinian refugee camps. From a technology of control in the hands of the state authorities as it was in the past, the camp is turned into a technology of invisibility by the same subjects that the sovereign intends to exclude. As the banned exploit the space's exceptional legal status, foreigners can hide from the police and the state in the eventuality they overstay their visa terms. By the same token, the camp is an exception not only in terms of rights as it hosts those stripped of any protection. The camp itself becomes a finer form of resistance as along with rights it excepts duties (Hanadi, 2008b). As the very exception that once produced bare life might be transformed into a form of resistance, the development of informal economies in the camp must be seen as a coping strategy that exploits the exceptionality of this space and the Lebanese authorities' disengagement.

I am not suggesting that Shatila and other camps of metropolitan Beirut are representative of the situation of the Palestinian refugees in Lebanon. As discussed above (Chapter 5), the camp location and history along with security concerns guide the possibilities of closures or openness. The same degree of flow and freedom of movement is not allowed elsewhere. While after the civil war checkpoints were a main feature of the refugee spaces and the Lebanese landscape more generally, in the 1990s controls were dramatically reduced in Beirut but never eased in the camps of the south. So while the camps of the south must be seen as closed spaces (Hanafi, 2008b), the camps in the capital present a rather different situation. In the case of metropolitan Beirut camps, their proximity to the centre of power seems to be an indirect form of control that could not be guaranteed elsewhere.[12] However, this absence of direct control leads to the impossibility of distinguishing physically and also symbolically the camp from what lies on its outside. If state authorities wanted to control the outcasts of the system, it would be difficult to locate security checkpoints nowadays since the refugee population is dispersed also in informal gatherings around the camps and other areas of the cities such as Said Ghawash, Daouq, Sabra, and Hay El-Gharby all located in the south-west part of the city (Abbas *et al.*, 1997). Indeed, the expansion of the alleged threat, embodied by the Palestinians refugees, the deprived Lebanese and immigrants, would render surveillance of these areas

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[12] Insights from interview with Jaber Suleiman, Mar Elias, 14 January 2008. Interview conducted in English.

extremely difficult as the exception seems having 'leaked out' the camp to include also the 'slum'. Therefore, the need to transfer security checks and controls towards the heart of the city to protect economic and political activities and nodes by closing down the centre and the shopping malls rather than the camp.

It is worth noting that while refugees have a clear sense of where camp boundaries lie and of what constitutes the camp in the legal sense of the term, this official discourse is not reflected in the stories of the Palestinians. As emerged during the interviews, to them 'camp' is wherever Palestinians live and wherever there is a significant Palestinian presence. The impossibility of borrowing legal and official definitions of what a camp is and who is to be considered 'banned' encourages to broadened the enquiry and include other spatialities and lives.

Although living conditions in the camps are deteriorating because of overcrowding and the lack of adequate services, this situation is not peculiar of the camp only but it is shared by areas and buildings lying next to it as well as other Palestinian informal settlements (Abbas *et al.*, 1997; UN-HABITAT and UNDP, 2010; Zabaneh *et al.*, 2008). Shatila is, in fact, situated in an area, like other Beirut's camps, characterised by low-income, deprivation, low levels of educations, state's neglect as regards services, assistance, infrastructures and systems of care to mention but a few (see also Fawaz and Peillen, 2002). Those inhabiting the camp are not worse-off if compared to those living outside legally or squatting. In this way, Shatila lives a tension between its exceptionality as refugee camp, also in legal terms, and its exclusion from the city centre as part of the 'slum'. While the legal boundaries of the camp matter in as much as Palestinians living inside the camp are considered 'legal' while those squatting in adjacent areas risk the demolition and eviction every day, these distinctions seem to no longer make sense as law and practices blur into each other. Another example of these blurred boundaries is provided by the case of taxation. While it is not applied in the camp rendering goods cheaper and an incentive to shop inside the camp itself (Howe, 2005), it does not seem likely to be applied in the informal and poor settlements around it.

If for one moment we abandon the notion of exception in its legal understanding and embrace an exception that might be working on economic and social lines, we might realise how the distinction between the camp and the slum cannot easily be drawn. As the camp welcomes the undesirable and all those excluded from the right to and the space of the city, so does the slum as the logic of exclusion expands indefinitely. Just like the Armenian camps at the beginning of the last century constituted points of attraction for

those in need and search of better opportunities, so did and does Shatila along with other Palestinian refugee camps in Beirut. While the Lebanese authorities' control and engagement in place produced the closure of the camp, their abandonment allows motion and change. Motion, as Palestinians began settling outside the camp boundaries. Change, as today the camp has turned into a possibility for those who need to hide from the state's control and who cannot afford to live elsewhere.

Borrowing Zygmunt Bauman's (2000, 2002, 2007) metaphor of liquidity, while in general terms refugee camps are considered 'holes in time and space' as the police contain the refugees within the camp boundaries and prevent them from 'leaking out' and 'spilling over', Shatila cannot keep its shape any longer and turns into a 'liquid camp' as it expands and allows in-and-out flows. Just like the camp inhabitants leak out, so does the exception as along with the refugees it includes the citizens and other outcasts. The heterogeneous population of the camp meets the diverse residents of the informal settlements as both these spaces hosts Palestinian refugees, Lebanese rural migrants, the internally displaced, as well as other Arab and non-Arab people in the shaping of the 'campscape'.

Never has the French word standing for the term 'slum' been so revealing. As Mustafa Dikeç (2007) explains the term 'banlieu' derives from the word 'ban' or, to recall Agamben's take, the inclusive exclusion. As Agier (2011: 45) points out the *banlieu* is not a place but a relation because to be banned stands for that which is included by virtue of its own exclusion (see Chapter 1). Attached to the centre but abandoned by it, the degraded peripheries of the cities constitute spaces of exclusion and exception as regards care, services and effective planning strategies (see also Gandy, 2006). As the case of Beirut's informal settlements shows, apart from some exceptions – namely the Elissar project that aims at the rehabilitation of certain areas of south Beirut – the government and local constituencies do not intervene in these areas and prove incapable of engaging with it (Fawaz and Peillen, 2002; Harb, 2001, 2003; Harb El-Kak, 1996). Just like the refugee camp that was established as a short-term solution, the temporary character of certain peripheries was also a main feature of the informal settlements. But just like the camp turns its temporariness into permanency, or better 'frozen transience', so does the slum (see also Wacquant, 1999).

If once the wall of the city was to produce bare life, today the pulling down of that barrier marks the pulling down of clear distinctions and the penetration of the banned into the *polis*. In Beirut, for instance, it is not hard to see poor Shi'ites squatting next to luxurious hotels risking, awaiting but also resisting eviction (Khalaf, 1998: 56). As

Campscapes

Agamben (1995a, 1998) argues, whenever the unlocalisable, the bare life, became permanent and spatialised, the results has always been nothing but the camp. What we are facing today however, in the case of the Palestinian refugee camps in Beirut and the other outcasts of the Lebanese political and economic system, is that the unlocalisable has remained permanent but at the same time has exceeded the space of the camp. If the camp was born as the localisation of the exception, the link holding localisation and 'disorder' together have broken down as the supposed-to-be unqualified life has climbed over the fence and somehow entered the space of the city. One of the main critiques raised by Jenny Edkins to Agamben's position on biopolitics is his lack of attention for the reasons that nowadays lead to a more mobile society challenging solid physical and symbolic barriers of the nation-state system. In particular, according to Edkins (2000: 38):

> Agamben notes that the movement of populations typical of modernity leads to locations similar to the camp, such as the holding zones at airports for asylum seekers, and he considers the figure of the refugee. He does not analyse the politics of emergency or exception that produces this movement or the global liberal governance that arguably represents the contemporary form of biopolitics.

By analysing the space of destination and the ways in which power operates in Western democracies, Agamben seems to miss the causes leading to displacement. Investigating countries of origins, their governance and politics might better inform root causes of displacement and see how elsewhere life has become expendable in other ways. As Dikeç (2007: 24) stresses, neoliberalism must be understood as 'a specific form of political rationality producing new spaces'. In particular, it manifests itself at the urban level as it increases socio-economic inequalities discriminating the undesirable and the one that has no means to fight far superior forces (see also Davis, 2006). While urban informalities are understood as spaces hosting the excluded and marginalised, echoing Bayat, AlSayyad (2004) suggests that those inhabiting the ghetto of Chicago or the *favelas* of Rio did not lack integration into the system. Quite the contrary, as they are fully integrated 'but on terms that often cause them to be economically exploited, politically repressed, socially

stigmatised, and culturally excluded' as a materialisation of the truest and the most intimate meaning of 'ban' (p. 9).

As bare life in Beirut is not only represented by the Palestinian refugees, economic and social abandonment is applied to other categories of people including the very Lebanese citizens. The camp is no longer the spatial device that separates the refugees from the citizens. It is no longer a closed and surveilled space typical of disciplinary obsessions. As the state authorities withdraw, so the boundaries, physical and symbolical, separating the alleged bare life from the life protected and worth living blur. The overarching event, in fact, is not the separation of the refugee from the citizen, or the immigrant from the citizen, but as it is increasingly the case in other urban centres of the old and new worlds, the newness lies on 'greater propinquity in social and physical space' and on the threshold where the refugee/immigrant and natives encounter (Wacquant, 1999: 1645). The camp, therefore, escapes the modern illusion of creating homogenised spaces as flows bring heterogeneity in the camp and its outside giving rise to a campscape.

While motion, openness and change are the main features of Shatila refugee camp, the camp returns to its closed conceptualisation only in the official discourse as authorities treat it as an isolated area never connected to its surroundings, or better, connected only in negative terms as potential refuge of terrorist threats to national security (see Figure 4: UNRWA map of Shatila where buildings at its sides all of a sudden disappear as if non-existent). Rather than following the closed space discourse, in the next section, the camp is reconsidered in its enclosure only in order to analyse other dynamics and the effects of its openness as different banned meet.

Shatila as contested space:
Between Palestine and the space of the marginalised

This chapter started with the problematisation of the camp as a space dedicated to the refugees only. But, as discussed so far, the camp is never static. It is an ever changing space. In particular, since the end of the civil war especially, it does not host the Palestinians only, but also all those people that are excluded and marginalised. As the city is synonymous of encounter and diversity, the variety of people inhabiting Shatila leads us to consider the camp as a city-like structure. As Agier (2002: 322, 2008, 2011) suggests, the camp, just like the city, becomes the place in which different identities meet, affect

each other, establish networks and create possibilities. By questioning if the camp can actually be considered as 'a space of urban sociability', Agier identifies three main features of urban life (see also Perouse De Montclos and Kagwanja, 2000: 207-208). According to him, three parameters are essential for a city to be defined as such. It must hold a 'social stratification', a 'social differentiation' and a 'symbolic of place'.

Using Agier's lens of enquiry my intention here is not only to see if Shatila could be considered an urban space as explored so far focusing on networks, relations and interactions. I make use of Agier's prism in order to see the ways in which these relations and features affect the Palestinian community and the camp within its boundaries. It is extremely difficult, however, to draw clear identitarian and national boundaries between people considering the mixed composition of the area and the fact that identity is certainly not a given.

'Social stratification' in the Palestinian camp of Shatila is exemplified by the presence of different kinds of professionals and workers that at times might even guarantee its self-sufficiency as different skills are present in the camp. The camp at the beginning was mainly inhabited by a rural population that having lost their land in Palestine had to adapt to survive this new reality. Refugees of the camp reinvented themselves in new professions and jobs. Already in the early years of their residency in Lebanon, they went through a process of 'economic transformation' according to which they turned from sharecroppers and peasants into a proletariat class at the margin of the capital (Sayigh, 2007: xxv). Today in Shatila, there are school teachers, engineers, builders, painters, plasterers, sewers, social workers, shopkeepers, hairdressers, barbers, doctors, nurses and all the variety of vocations and skills that would characterise a professionally diversified society typical of an urban environment.

'Social differentiations', however, seems to be one of the most crucial and interesting parameters to explore as Palestinians and non-Palestinians share the same space and conditions. This might lead to both positive and negative effects. The camp resembles the city in as much as over the years it has become a 'heterogeneous ensemble of identity', a result of the presence of different social and national identities (Agier, 2002). The openness of the camp and the proximity to the center of Beirut guarantee this 'social differentiation' that might encourage a change in the ways in which refugees conceive themselves, their spaces, their lifestyles and expectations. The removal of controls allows Lebanese as well as foreigners to access the camp. Along with identity change and social transformation, this same openness of the camp might bring also new opportunities as

precisely the establishment of new networks allows some sort of economic and social regeneration. As they develop new coping strategies to face their condition and socio-economic marginalisation, they contribute to the evolution and expansion of the informal sector by reinventing their roles and professions. Many improvised their construction abilities as they turned from farmers in Palestine to builders in Beirut as construction planning was flourishing before the civil war and as they managed to work through their Lebanese acquaintances. But also new transformations take place as from builders they might decide to become shopkeepers. For example, Yusuf, a Palestinian I met in Shatila, decided to free one room on the ground floor where he lives and turned part of his house into a shop. The opening of his shop was guaranteed by contacts with acquaintances and commercial stores outside the camp that provided the goods to sell. As he says:

> [...] then I started selling textile and fabrics [...] I got them from everywhere.. China, Taiwan, UK, Italy... I got them from other wholesale dealers.[13]

Clearly a closure of the camp would not have allowed such exchange of goods and would have impeded the development of networks. Now, however, as the distinction of the camp is blurred, flows of people as well as material are facilitated if compared to the past when checkpoints slowed down these in-and-out movements.

While the process of transformation according to which social and economic changes occur in the camp is partly due to this social differentiation, the geographical location of the camp also plays a major role as with the years it has become part of the urban structure of Beirut. Being connected to the city, though not entirely part of it because of a politics of exclusion preventing assimilation, has an impact that is not experienced by other Palestinians residing in other more rural camps. Though a Palestinian identity is still very much prominent, social change in the Palestinian community of the camp might occur, as today, traditions live along with new patterns and more urban ways of life. The urban context might allow changes in identity as well as expectations or potential and gradual dissolution of the hope of a return to Palestine. Expectations in Shatila might

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[13] Yusuf, Shatila, 18 November 2008. Interview conducted in Arabic.

certainly be different from expectations in other camps of the country. As Sayigh (1994: 85) maintains:

> The influence of urban Arab and Lebanese culture was naturally stronger in camps like Shateela and Bourj Barajneh than in the rural camps which remained, in comparison, 'conservative' and 'backward' (terms used of them by the camp people). Perceptions of city people as 'civilised' and village people as the opposite have strong roots in Arabic culture and society. In Shateela, this cultural hierarchy was given weight by the presence of city Palestinians as well as the closeness of the city.

Cinemas and bars, as she reveals, were one of the first urban influences that the camp went through. The first cinema of the area, Cinema Sharq, was opened adjacent to Shatila in the early 1960s when refugees began appreciating both their proximity to the capital and going to the cinema (ibid). As regards the present day, although Omar, a Palestinian student I met, has a clear sense of identity at the point of not being willing to accept the Lebanese citizenship were it offered, he spends some of his free time playing football or wondering with his friends around the centre of Beirut or the fanciest shopping malls of the capital. Never buying anything, as he cannot afford to, he somehow seems attracted by another kind of life that at the moment he enjoys seeing from far while dreaming of a job in Dubai that would guarantee him a proper income and the chance to help his family. [14]

However, this change occurring at the social level does not imply that new lifestyles are acritically accepted as traditions and the memory of village life are still present in the camp. The building and dwelling patterns are for instance a strong reminder of Palestine village life in the first half of the past century. The importance of family bonds is spatially translated as all members of the same family tend to live in the same buildings and as new marriages welcome new members, the building expands vertically as to accommodate them (see also Harker, 2011).

As regards the coexistence of Palestinians with non-Palestinians, it would be quite naïve to assume that sharing the same space and condition would inevitably lead to

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[14] Omar, Shatila, 14 November 2008. Interview conducted in English.

positive relations of solidarity. Shatila and the community it is supposed to represent – the refugees – are both a highly contested arena. Tensions between solidarity and antagonism have always been part of the Palestinians refugees' relation with the Lebanese (for a deeper discussion on Palestinians' relationship with Shi'a neighbours and movements see Khalili, 2006, 2007). Moments of peaceful coexistence and mutual help have been alternated to periods of military fights and, sadly, even massacres. Another example reported by Sayigh (1994: 47-49), was the growing presence of Lebanese settling close to the camp in the 1950s when clashes occurred over some Lebanese youth smuggling drugs. Also the opening of a cafe in the camp or even outside the camp was not accepted and firmly opposed as the urbanisation of the area by non-Palestinians was perceived as an outrage to Palestinian morality constantly undermined by 'modernity'.

Despite years of conflicts and repeated military clashes between the Palestinians and the Lebanese, intermarriages occur. As emerged during the interviews, clear identity boundaries can never been drawn as many Palestinians have Lebanese relatives and some are married to Lebanese and Syrians living in the camp (for a glance into the intermarriage of Lebanese and Palestinians see Meier, 2008). However, as common as it was to hear about intermarriages and good relations with non-Palestinians as if the latter were completely absorbed and accepted in the camp community, it was also common to hear about fears of foreigners living or entering the camp. As the camp produces its own outcasts, fear and mistrust are somehow part of the attitude reserved to newcomers, not only perceived as a threat to moral values and traditions, but also as potential physical dangers for the community of the camp. Fully integrated in the camp life, Aziza, a Lebanese woman married to a Palestinian, says: 'There are all kinds of people here [...] the camp is multinational.. this is why I don't feel safe.. it is a cocktail'.[15] And Zahra, the Palestinian woman guiding me through the camp and encounters, comments saying 'this area from time to time is a bit dangerous.. there are Gypsies!'.[16] Yet, the Gypsies' presence could be disputable. They are labelled 'Gypsies' but nobody seems to know their stories or origins as, maybe, a simple wave to greet has always been enough. As emerged during other encounters in Shatila, the presence of Gypsies, in particular, is felt as deeply problematic as danger is seldom associated with them. This may be because of their non-Arab background, or perhaps because Gypsies never tried to integrate, or probably because the same inhabitants of the camp never tried to assimilate them. However, while with the

[15] Aziza, Shatila, 27 December 2008. Interview conducted in Arabic.
[16] Zahra's comments in English during our encounter with Aziza, see note above.

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Lebanese there is some sort of commonality as Lebanese and Palestinians share the same language, culture and sometimes traditions having experienced for centuries common Arab and later on Ottoman domination (Salam, 1988), this affinity is not perceived with other people that might have come from other countries or completely different realities.

Mahmoud, a Palestinian living in Shatila, for instance, raises some issues on the presence of foreigners in the camp:

> You don't feel safe because here, in the same area, other people are living in Shatila but you don't know them! Maybe they are thieves, maybe they are good.. you don't know!'.[17]

According to Ibrahim, foreigners should not be living in the camp. This could not only be a danger for the safety and security of the camp population, but the presence of non-Palestinians might contribute to the loss of the Palestinian tradition and identity.[18] Security concerns are becoming more common especially after the events of Nahr El-Bared in 2007 (see Chapter 5). Afraid that events like that might happen again in Shatila, that along with other camps offered hospitality to the refugees of Nahr El-Bared for a long time, Palestinians in the camp would rather live with those whom they have always been knowing than facing the unknown.

But the fear of the foreigners entails other domains also. According to Halabi (2004) the question of morality is really imperative in the camp too as the influx of single workers, in particular Syrians, is not welcomed as families are afraid for the women and girls of the camp. While in the camp there are some problems of domestic violence, as Halabi goes on to suggest, the blame for any immoral activity is on the foreigners who are also perceived as competitors in the access to the very limited resources of the camp as the overcrowding situation deteriorates.

Despite the fact that the camp could be seen as a space of hospitality as it welcomes those in need like internally displaced Lebanese from the July 2006 war or the displaced of Nahr El-Bared, the camp is still much perceived as a piece of Palestine and the last piece of land remained for them unless a return will be allowed (on hospitality see

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[17] Mahmoud, Shatila, 14 November 2008. Interview conducted in Arabic.
[18] Insights from interview with Ibrahim, Shatila, 20 December 2008. Interview conducted in Arabic.

Khalili, 2006; Ramadan 2008). The camp seems to hold together a strong sense of Palestinian-ness as '[w]hat creates a political refugee identity is [...] not just poverty, which refugees share with many of the surrounding populations, but a mix of low status, limited opportunity, vulnerability, and thwarted national identity' (Sayigh, 1998: 20). The camp becomes the place where it is possible to keep alive memories of the homeland and the hope in the return. It is the place where it is possible to create continuities with Palestine manifested in different ways. Even though some of them has never seen their village of origin – as Palestinians like to remember their origin through the place in which their parents or grandparents have once lived – the connection with the far away is strengthened by technology. Hadi, for instance, explains the ways in which he learnt how to use a computer:

> I work by memorising things… I don't know the language [English]… when I first got a PC… you know XXX centre? I am one of the founders [...] At that time we had a Pentium 2 in the centre. [...] I was afraid of the idea of working with a computer. I didn't know anything about it. My friends were working on a project called "The memory" and they were preparing a CD with traditional songs, so they proposed to buy a PC. We founded an institution, bought a Pentium 3 and started working on it but they didn't allow me to use it… they said that if I wanted to learn I should have used the older one. So I learnt. First I started with the basics, then power point and now I do some graphic design. [...] it is hard for me to follow up all the new technology since I don't know the language… it is difficult to be up-dated… I learn through different attempts and mistakes.[19]

Beyond the fact that learning to use a computer with no explanation given might be remarkable, Hadi's story tells how Palestinians, despite the difficult condition, manage to overcome lack of knowledge and means with great effort and dedication. Technology is

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[19] Hadi, Shatila, 23 December 2008. Interview conducted in Arabic. For anonymity purposes, names have been removed.

used to connect, to remember, to create documents and files for the preservation of the Palestinian traditions. But as Hadi told me, now and then he likes to check, through Google Earth, the houses of his parents in Palestine. Technology can, in fact, connect them to their homeland enhancing that bond and creating continuities transcending physical distances and obstacles.

But there are also other ways to maintain the continuity with Palestine as people still keep the keys of their houses abandoned decades ago or the documents that prove ownership of the land and the house when once they, or their parents or grandparents lived in present day Israel. Documents that still hold the British stamps as issued during the mandate. These are the materialities that strengthen the connection by not allowing them to give up the hope and desire of return (Bennett, 2004). Along with keys and materialities that once touched the Palestinian land, memories and traditions typical of the village of origin are reproduced and reconstituted. The continuous reference to the village of origin shows how Palestinian village life and specificities are still indelible markers along with more recent memories of atrocities the camp population endured in their more recent past in Lebanon.

Memories of the remote and more recent pasts interweave in the 'symbolic of place'. Back in the 1950s, quarters and streets in the camp were named after villages in Palestine. And later some of them have been replaced with names of predominant Palestinian factions especially after the Cairo Agreement and the rise of the Resistance. Hospitals and Palestinian Red Crescent Clinics, though outside the camp, are named after some Palestinian cities, like the Gaza hospital in Sabra[20] or the Haifa hospital not far from Burj El-Barajneh camp. The 'there' and 'then' live along with the 'here' and 'now'. Overlapping layers of memories connect the Palestinians to their old village life, to the national leaders of the past and the present as well as to more Lebanese or Shatila specificities. Pictures of Arafat or Shaykh Ahmad Yassin – founder and spiritual leader of Hamas until 2004 when he was killed by an Israeli aerial raid – might be hung right next to a Hezbollah poster. Having for long supported the Palestinian cause, and though the solidarity relationship between the party and the Palestinians is very complex, Hezbollah has come to represent another strength for many refugees who still believe in the liberation

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[20] The Gaza hospital is not operative today. During the 1982 Israeli invasion and heavy shellings of the area, the hospital was partially destroyed. Nowadays, it is occupied by Palestinian families who turned it into flats where to live.

of their land or as they get services from the party that the Lebanese government do not offer or that UNRWA offers only partially (Khalili, 2006, 2007).

But it is not only the Lebanese environment to somehow affect the deployment of visual memories or political posters. Beyond the connection to Palestine, the camp throughout these decades, in fact, has also developed a quite peculiar identity typical of Shatila only. Pictures of the martyrs of the camp who fought till death to defend the camp population during the multiple sieges are to be found all over the streets and buildings. A memorial dedicated to the victims and martyrs of the 'War of the Camps' and located right in the middle of the camp next to the mosque, is one of the first places that Palestinians would show to those interested in visiting the camp as ultimate witness of Shatila's predicament so soaked in violence.

While there seems to be a common Palestinian identity, this same identity is fragmented. The geographical dispersal in different countries and in different camps of the same state contribute to ruptures with the past or official discourses imposed by the Palestinian leadership over the years, and produce new meanings specific to each camp (Hanafi, 2008b; Khalili, 2004a; Peteet, 2005). Each camp has built its own community made of good memories, like Palestinian traditional weddings, but also tragic and terrible reminiscences. It is in this context, in the recollections of the most recent past and 'Lebanese events', that the camp to a certain extent distances itself from the homeland to embrace a more peculiar 'Shatila' identity made of joyful moments, taking the children of the camp to the park to play, but also memories of violence. However specific to Shatila, collective identities and experiences of Palestinian-ness seem not to disappear as they are all displayed in the camp through so powerful visual tools in between past and present lives (see below Figure 8, picture of a famous Palestinian character named Handala[21] on the wall of a house, part of the collective cultural and political Palestinian background).

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[21] Handala, which in Arabic means 'bitterness', is a character born out of the pen of the famous Palestinian cartoonist, Naji El-Ali (1937-1987). Handala, always portrayed from the back and his hands clasped behind as in sign of resignation, appears in most of Naji El-Ali's cartoons as a witness to violence and to the Palestinian condition. As the cartoonist suggested, Handala is a child aged ten and will never grow up. As if symbolising the 'frozen transience' of refugees, he can acquire a natural life and grow only when he will be allowed back to his homeland.

Figure 8: Handala in Shatila. Picture taken by the author, December 2008.

As foreigners' presence trigger the fear of losing their identity, space and cause, the camp somehow becomes Palestine, their piece of national land that refugees would never want to give up. Expressing his anger towards those Palestinians who abandon the camp, in this way empting dwellings for potential foreigners, Hakim, a Palestinian student and worker, says:

> Why these people emigrate and other people come here?! And this
> is not good with respect to us because we... from camp to Palestine
> only! Not to another country![22]

The presence of foreigners in the camp cannot help but enhancing their collective identity while the presence of the camp itself prevents them from forgetting their origins, roots and craved return. The spatiality of the camp, the poor conditions, the insecure and seldom unsafe shelters are constant reminders of their status, their displacement and predicament. As long as the camp is there, as long as its exceptional and temporary character is maintained there is hope for the return. It is precisely the dissolution of this space that would implant in the Palestinians a sense of failure. This tension between temporariness

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[22] Hakim, Shatila, 17 December 2008. Interview conducted in English.

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and permanency is, in fact, expressed in the built environment of the camp that keeps on responding to the logic of emergency rather than normalcy. Constructing one flat on the top of other with no planning as well as the use of solid material alternated to less solid fabrics are materialisations of this 'permanent temporariness'. This is the reason why major improvements in the camp would not be welcomed unless they represent the minimum necessary to just be able to conduct a decent life. Any improvement is negotiated in ways in which it could never lead to permanency as 'the temporary becomes a way of life' (Sivan, 2007: 155; see also Farah, 2003; and Abourahme and Hilal, Forthcoming).

'Masters in waiting', as Omar likes to define themselves, Palestinians seem not to give up and as Abdullah reminds:

> The Palestinian people have the ability to survive, to bear the hunger and the exhaustion. We have the will to abide all this. You are aware of what is happening in Gaza in these days.. No electricity, no food, nothing! And they are bombing day and night.. but they will not surrender even if there is only one grip of land left in their hands.. And here is the same.[23]

Remaining in the camp could be therefore seen as their last grip to their homeland. After more than sixty years from the Nakba, Shatila is still much a reality and the place where collective Palestinian memories converge with more Lebanese and camp specific ones. The willingness to preserve the camp as such, with all its exceptionalities and even negative sides, makes of Shatila embody the road to Palestine and the road to their right of return. The resistance is towards integration in Lebanese society and, at the same time, constitutes a continuous and thorny challenge for both Israel and the international community that have yet to find a solution for the millions of displaced. As the camp keeps alive the hope that return is still possible, the camp itself materialises and spatialises the being political of the refugees. The exception does not necessarily lead to the annihilation of the subject. It is precisely in this moment that playing and mocking the exception that would want them killable, the people of Shatila turns this same exception into the ultimate form of resistance.

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[23] Abdullah, Shatila, 17 November 2008. Interview conducted in Arabic.

Campscapes

Concluding remarks

While Agamben argues that the camp is the biopolitical paradigm of politics today, the chapter challenges his reflections and shows how the camp may only partially capture the life that the sovereign casts out the normal juridical order. Starting from a reflection on the presence of non-Palestinians in Shatila, who constitute thirty percent of the camp population, the chapter has questioned the kind of biopolitics at stake in Lebanon. Secondly, it has questioned the role of Shatila refugee camp today and the spatialities of the exception.

Abandoning a legal and juridical model that looks at bare life in terms of law and rights, the chapter has focused on flows, openness and has taken motion, changes and processes as references for an investigation on the exception. This approach explained the presence of other kinds of outcasts within Shatila. As the Palestinians are stripped of their rights, citizenship and protection, the exception 'floats' and is not limited to national belonging distinctions. While the first *caesura* of the population in Lebanon divides the Lebanese from the Palestinians – the citizen from the refugee – other distinctions run along economic and sectarian lines. The latter allows certain Palestinians (the Christians and the upper class) to be included in the normal juridical order and even acquire citizenship that sanctions the inclusion. Yet, secondary distinctions exclude some Lebanese citizens from the protection and care they are supposed to receive.

In this context, structures like refugee camps increasingly become sites that are no longer inhabited by refugees exclusively as the camp welcomes the multiple outcasts of the Lebanese neoliberal and sectarian system. We are not assisting to a distinction that separates the life of the refugee from the qualified political life of the citizen, but witness the increasing propinquity of different kinds of banned who share the same condition and spaces. As both Palestinians and Lebanese (and other outcasts) live in the camp as well as outside, the exception exceeds the boundaries of the camp to include informal settlements flourishing around Shatila. The difficulty to localise the space of exception leads to consider the formation of a new spatial model that I call 'campscape' in which refugee camps and informal settlements represent a new enlarged exception. Although legally the space of exception is represented by the camp only (as placed in a different juridico-political order), life, processes and circumstances blur those boundaries. As it was shown in the previous chapter, perhaps an abandonment of spatial disciplinary obsessions have led to the leakage of the exception from the space of the camp to its outside.

This also shows how the camp itself is not a static space. Shatila's urban location has provided an interesting example to understand the ways in which the camp is still bound to the city through its exclusion along with the informal settlements and to reveal the ways in which Shatila's proximity to the centre of Beirut may affect the camp's inhabitants. The camp provides shelters and cheap accommodation for those who cannot afford to live in the city, but the presence of a high number of non-Palestinian has yet to completely change Shatila's character and exceptionality. Although the function of the camp has changed over time as it hosts other outcasts, the presence of foreigners including Lebanese does not lead to the dissolution of the exception (or at least not yet). Despite the presence of non-Palestinians, Shatila is still very much perceived as a Palestinian space. The camp, in fact, combines a Palestinian symbolism shared by all the Palestinians no matter where they live, symbolisms that are peculiar to the Lebanese context, as well as memories that are peculiar to Shatila only. Although the proximity of the camp to the centre of Beirut and though presenting characteristics typical of a city-like structure (social stratification and differentiation, and a symbolic of place), Shatila is still very much perceived a piece of Palestine that refugees do not want to give up. The presence of non-Palestinians triggers fears for the security of the camp population, but also fear of losing and forgetting their identity and the role of the refugee camp. Preserving the camp, its history, memory and purpose is the last form of resistance for the refugees as they refuse to be naturalised in Lebanon and they refuse the dissolution of their cause. Remaining in the camp may be forced through their exclusion and marginalisation. Yet, it may also be a conscious decision to re-affirm their status of refugees and their right of return. As waiting becomes the foundation of the Palestinian identity, maintaining the exceptionality of the camp still represents their road to Palestine.

Conclusions

In this research, I have explored the complexities of sovereignty, sovereign power and the exception as they are manifested in the Palestinian lives and refugee camps in Lebanon. In particular, at both the global and local scales, I set to investigate the multiple sovereigns that impact upon the Palestinian lives. Beyond the Lebanese government's policies, whose decisions reduce the Palestinians to bare life? What and where are these decisions taken? Not only interested in the official realm of politics and political institutions, I have also interrogated the relevance of a law-and-right approach. Is the life stripped of rights incapable of political agency or resistance? What, if any, are the ways in which refugees react to and challenge the sovereign decision?

Questioning the law-and-right approach was also essential to uncover the complex networks of power relations within and beyond the space of refugee camps. More specifically, I have interrogated and problematised the uncritical assimilation of refugee camps to spaces of exception. Established as temporary structures, refugee camps are increasingly proving as lasting and permanent. So, in protracted situations of refugeehood (like that represented by the Palestinian refugees) what happens to the space of exception? What is the relation of the space of exception to state's sovereignty and control? Can new power relations and forms of governance take place within these spaces? Moreover, interested in revealing the relation of the refugee camp with what lies outside, I also looked at the refugee camp through the urban prism and in its relation to the city. In light of this investigation, can the refugee camp maintain the same role and indentity over time?

Agamben's reflections have provided invaluable insights for the examination of the ways in which sovereign power operates and produces Palestinian bare life. Yet, a combination of his theories with Foucault's understanding of power have proved crucial to recognise the ongoing discrimination of the Palestinians through their exclusion by means of law alongside the recognition of the political value of the refugees' voices and agency. In these pages, I have discussed how a life stripped of its juridical significance at the point of being killable with impunity reacts to the sovereign decision. Although placed at the margins of politics, the Palestinians have proved to be also active participants on the power relation chessboard.

Conclusions

This study has shown that sovereign power cannot be identified with sovereign statehood only. The Palestinian refugees in Lebanon are affected by a multiplicity of sovereigns inhabiting different geopolitical scales. Sovereignty is not a prerogative of the state that can perform unlimited violence (or protection) towards those residing on its exclusive sovereign territory, but is a relation in which different actors (supra-state as well as sub-state) act on each other and influence each other. As it cannot be identified with the state only, it is shown how sites of political decisions are multiple and spread on global and political levels. In particular, the 'global dimension of sovereignty' demonstrates that, although state power and authority are not dead (Connolly, 2005), they compete with and confront decisions taken in other sites (other states' and suprastate organisations' decisions). This was demonstrated in Chapter 3. While investigating the more official realm of politics, I have discussed the relation between decisions taken by different actors (the international community, UNHCR, UNRWA, some Arab states and the Lebanese government) and affecting the Palestinian refugees' lives. The non-solution of the refugee problem and the question of Palestine in 1948 had serious repercussions for the displaced. The depoliticisation of their life occurred in different moments and sites. While the statelessness was produced through the dissolution of the British Mandate for Palestine and the creation of the state of Israel, the persistence of their bare life condition was maintained and reproduced by the international community's inability to solve their lack of protection as well as humanitarian agencies that while focusing on the Palestinians' survival neglected the political significance of their lives. Moreover, I have shown how numerous attempts to naturalise the Palestinians in the Arab host countries and the pending solution of their refugee status are met with hostility and resistance by the Lebanese government and, more recently and intensely, by Lebanese society. By preventing the refugees' naturalisation the Lebanese authorities, in fact, continue to present the international community (and indeed the Palestinian Authority, the PLO and Israel) with ongoing challenges. The further marginalisation of the Palestinians in Lebanon and exclusion from basic human rights must be understood as a well-targeted message levelled at the international community and at the Palestinians. It is paramount to recognise these signs and to uncover how these affect the Palestinian community in Lebanon now and in the future.

If the global dimension of sovereignty was discussed through an investigation of different political and humanitarian institutions, this research has also demonstrated how power should be disenfranchised from the notion of statehood and from political

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institutions only (Edkins and Pin-Fat, 1999). Chapters 4, 5 and 6, in particular, have examined the agency of the refugees. Despite the refugees' legal abandonment represented by their being stateless and unprotected, Palestinians fight back and do not surrender as explored in Chapter 4. As through their actions refugees reject a life of passive reception of humanitarian aid, this study has revealed that if power takes life as its reference and object of intervention, so does resistance. Through different strategies of 'incidental resistance' (Scott, 1985) and 'quiet encroachments' (Bayat, 2010), the individual agency of the refugees – the transgression and bypassing of law – makes them resist annihilation. Strategies of self-help re-instate power relations after the sovereign's decisions. As power and resistance coexist, they are in a dialogical relation of prohibition-and-transgression, act-and-response. Although it does not bring revolutionary changes and does not seriously undermine the structure of domination as power continues to circulate unevenly, this 'politics of practice' (as opposed to the 'politics of protest') enacts and endorses the rights of which the sovereign has stripped them. These unorganised, unplanned, individual and self-indulgent practices provide them with the necessary to survive.

Power relations including technologies of power and forms of resistance have then been explored in their spatialisations. The refugee camp has been critically examined as space of exception. In revealing its complexities in Chapter 5 and 6, I have argued that the refugee camp lives a tension between law and life. Although it is placed outside the normal juridical order, it was shown how the camp is never static but in constant evolution as different actors (the Lebanese authorities, humanitarian agencies, the Palestinian representatives and factions, refugees themselves as well as other inhabitants) shape its meanings and functions.

In investigating the ways in which the exception operates, in Chapter 5 I have argued that although the legal exception is maintained over time, the ways in which relations of power occur in these spaces may change. As Agamben (1995a, 1998) affirms that the camp is included in the domain of power by virtue of its exclusion, different technologies of power (and technologies of inclusion) may be utilised over time and different circumstances. Although it is generally accepted that the inclusion of the refugee camp in the domain of state power is achieved through the state authorities' disciplinary control and surveillance, the ways in which Palestinian camps in Lebanon are today included in the domain of state authorities certainly differ. If the disciplinary model was a prerogative of the Lebanese authorities until 1969, the signing of the Cairo Agreement marks the absence of their engagement and control. It may seem that the exceptionality of

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the camp is dramatised through a double exclusion (excluded from normal juridical order and abandonment of management) and, therefore, that the inclusive moment is lost. Yet, I argue that even if the state disengages from the control of the refugee camps at the point that Palestinian camps resemble islands of Palestinian territory within Lebanese sovereignty, state authorities maintain a control in potentiality. Manifestation of a securitarian mode that let things be and limits intervention, the disengagement is never complete. While the disengagement from the camp is the result of the potentiality not-to-be and not-to-act, this potentiality may be actualised and control re-instated through modulated intervention. As the case of Nahr El-Bared shows, although the abandonment of state-centric perspectives is useful to better explore power relations and recognise the agencies of other actors, the Lebanese state's control over the camps is maintained in potentiality by keeping the possibility of intervention open and acting when necessity so requires.

However, as long as the sovereign abandons the space of exception, the vacuum left by the Lebanese authorities may be filled by what Butler (2004) has defined 'petty sovereigns'. This has negative and positive consequences as sovereign power and control within the camp are reproduced by popular committees and other Palestinian factions who manage the camp and its population. The lack of coordination and the increasing competition of these actors for the control of this space, leads to the spread of corruption that is manifested the most in the questionable administration of justice. If Palestinian bare life was once produced by the international community, humanitarian agencies, Arab states and the Lebanese government, now life is rendered bare within the camp boundaries and by the very Palestinians who are supposed to protect their communities.

Despite these negative implications, I have also demonstrated how the space of exception can still be turned into a positive and productive space as refugees experiment forms of governance (see the first democratic elections occurred in Shatila) and self-administration. The camp is not only the absolute biopolitical space inhabited by bare life, but could also be the space where the refugees can reconstitute their normalcy, produce and negotiate their own subjectivities, as well as resist the marginalisation from the outside through the resistance from within. As informal economies develop such as the real-estate economy, the camp can turn into a space of hope where for refugees it is possible to perform everything that is excepted to them outside its boundaries.

Through an investigation of the camp in its relation to the city and informal settlements, I have discussed the role of Shatila and the ways in which the function of the

camp may change. From a space of exception hosting the refugees, Shatila has turned into a space that welcomes all the outcasts of the Lebanese political and economic system. Moreover, the disengagement of the Lebanese authorities from the camp in 1969 has facilitated the greater propinquity of the Palestinians and non-Palestinians as the boundaries of the camp increasingly blur. As no barrier separates them from the outside, flow and movement is guaranteed while the camp is no longer distinguishable from the informal settlements around it.

Through the presence of Lebanese citizens within the camp, I have shown how the sovereign exception should be disenfranchised from an exclusive law-and-rights framework. While Lebanese formally are included in the protection of the sovereign, they are *de facto* marginalised at the point of sharing the Palestinians' social and economic exclusion. Perhaps because too poor, or perhaps because married to a Palestinian, the presence of Lebanese in the camp shows how life itself does not know distinctions. As the camp boundaries increasingly blur, so do identitarian boundaries separating the Palestinians from the Lebanese.

While I do not argue that this kind of evolution in the camp's meaning and function is a model to be uncritically applied to other spaces of exception or the investigation of other refugee camps, I assert that the refugee camp is a space in potentiality. Once the exception is declared there is no single outcome. As understood by Agamben, it can turn into a space of abjection and, therefore, a technology of power aimed at the elimination of the biological threat. But it can also transform into a productive space that welcomes other outcasts or in which the inhabitants exploit and mock the exceptionality of the camp. The ways in which the camp develops are determined by multiple factors. Change can be dictated by the sovereign (Lebanon or other states or suprastate organisations intervening in these sites); the circumstances (location, for example, could be one factor as Shatila's proximity to the centre of Beirut has certainly influenced the ways in which the camp has transformed and along with it its population); the agency of people living in the camp and its proximity (for instance, the development of informal economies). Actors, events and circumstances that not always can be controlled and guided by the sovereign.

In this context, I have also shown that the decision over the exception is not an exclusive prerogative of the sovereign. In preserving the Palestinian-ness of the camp and along with it the 'temporary' character of this space, the refugees turn the camp's exceptionality on their favour. The preservation of the Palestinian identity and traditions are to be seen as another form of resistance. This time not an incidental resistance, but a

political and conscious one aimed at not forgetting their origins and their predicament. As long as Shatila maintains the role for which it was established (temporary settlement of refugees waiting the return), the Palestinians can still hope in the return. As Palestinians also voluntarily choose to live in the camp, resistance to formal politics (those who would rather see the refugees naturalised and assimilated in host countries) is enacted in the very space of exclusion.

In giving a contribution to the discipline of Refugees Studies, this research has revealed the complex nexus that links the humanitarian to the political. Denying the political significance of humanitarian interventions and assistance would dismiss the humanitarian organisations' complicit role in reducing certain subjects to bare life, a life stripped of any political and juridical value. Further interrogating the relation between the humanitarian and the political becomes paramount for the discipline of Refugee Studies if we are to fight sovereigns that draw lines dividing the life worth living from the one not worth living. If Agamben's theories would limit an investigation on the lives and experiences of those who have been cast out, still his insights and reflections could inspire an examination of the refugee status and refugees' 'forms of life'. More specifically, uncritically accepting definitions of who is to be considered 'refugee' (be them operational as in the case of UNRWA or legal as in the case of UNHCR) might lead to think that only those who have officially been recognised as such are worthy of protection and/or assistance and, therefore, worthy of investigation. Yet, those who are excluded from both the political and humanitarian spheres, are rendered even more invisible. If refugees are excluded from a nation-state system and protection, those who are also excluded from the humanitarian assistance because of operational and legal definitions are further marginalised and forgotten. This means not only investigating the lives of 'political refugees', but also interrogating the meaning of refugeeness today to include in our analyses also those that are rendered refugees in other contexts and circumstances. Indeed, lines separating the so-called 'political refugees' from 'economic refugees' are so fragile and breakable as it was shown in the case of Palestinians who may share their marginal conditions with other outcasts (among others see Black, 2001; Malkki, 1995b). Contesting and challenging these definitions is important to challenge sovereign powers (states as well as humanitarian organisations) that by drawing lines decide the political significance and insignificance of lives.

This research also demonstrated that we should be ready to embrace new frameworks of analysis. Crucial for both the disciplines of Geography and Refugee

Conclusions

Studies, examining the camp and the 'campscape' has shown how previous spatial models of reflection might be disrupted. The refugee camp cannot be uncritically assimilated to the space of exception as described by Agamben for three main reasons. Firstly, refugee camps are increasingly becoming permanent solutions to displacement (Agier, 2011; Sivan, 2007). Rather than seeing refugee camps as responding to the logic of emergency or temporariness, there is an urgency to examine these sites through the lens of 'normality' and as spaces in evolution. An approach that considers the refugee camp for its legal aspect only would inevitably miss new forms of living and being political that may rise in these spaces. Whilst I am not arguing that life in the camp is easy, refugee camps should be also considered as productive spaces in evolution where new forms of governance are experimented (Hanafi, 2010b). Rather than addressing the camps as potential threats, we might examine them as laboratories of the politics at the margins where the excluded (be them the refugees or other outcasts) may reproduce their new normalcy and negotiate their lives.

Secondly, if we consider the camp through law, we risk neglecting spaces that deserve equal attention because they are placed outside the 'normal order' in other ways. This study has problematised the legal prism in approaching the exception. I have argued that the exception does not work on legal tracks only. As Palestinians are legally excluded from the state's protections, other outcasts are produced along other kinds of political, social and economic exclusion. Although this research has focused on one refugee camp, Shatila, that has been officially recognised and, as such, receives relief and assistance, if we are to investigate lives and spaces that are placed at the margins, perhaps researching 'informal gatherings' (Palestinian and non-Palestinian) would be equally important. Like the example shown before, the recognition of a formal status (for both refugees and refugee camps) misses those who are left out and who are not even entitled to humanitarian assistance. Future investigations of the Palestinian lives and camps in Lebanon, for example, might want to consider the condition and the politics of informal gatherings. How are lives and spaces forgotten by formal politics lived?

Thirdly, it seems that the refugee camp is not the only spatial referent for refugees. As the figures of UNHCR (2010) show, the spatial order represented by the refugee camp is broken. UNHCR, in fact, estimates that only one third of refugees worldwide (those officially considered so) live in refugee camps. This certainly has methodological implications for future researches. We can no longer assume that the 'where' of the refugee is necessarily the camp. In light of this, future studies may enquire into the implications,

for refugees, of not living in these spaces. May living outside a refugee camp compromise their right or desire of return? How are the lives of refugees outside the camp negotiated?

In order to avoid the depoliticisation of lives, refugees should no longer be treated as mere objects of knowledge with no agency. This thesis has demonstrated how a legal understanding of life and spaces overlooks the political significance of life and spaces themselves, and further neglect processes and continuities reproduced by refugee communities. Only empirical analyses could grasp social, political and, not less important, economic dynamics occurring within and beyond the space of exception. This is also essential in light of potential negotiations and solution to refugees' displacements.

These theoretical and empirical considerations allow me to briefly return to the purpose with which this research has been initiated. This research started with the aim of not forgetting about the existence of the hundreds of thousands of Palestinians living outside Israel, the West Bank and Gaza. Living as refugees in host countries and often treated as inconvenient guests, diasporic Palestinians are too often neglected as if non-existent as if the solution to the question of Palestine would be exhausted once the Palestinian state will be born. This research wanted to tell the predicament of those living in Lebanon in order to urge a solution for their displacement and recognise the political significance of their lives. Since 1948, as a solution to their displacement could not be found, the international community and Israel have pressed for the refugees' naturalisation in the Arab host countries (as explored in Chapter 3). Yet, if Lebanon along with Syria and Jordan continue to refuse such naturalisation, the refugee question (and indeed their lives also outside UNRWA's areas of operation) would remain suspended and Palestinians fated to endure further exclusions and hardship in host states. Leaving them suspended for more than sixty years has not led them to forget about their lost lands, identity and origins. Nor does it seem likely that they will forget about their displacement if no feasible resolution is found for their prolonged 'legal inexistence'. Not only is it paramount that refugees are considered the priority of any negotiations between the Israeli and the Palestinian delegations, but grassroots involvement in such negotiations is also highly recommended. Throughout their displaced existence as individuals as well as communities, the Palestinians have shown capacity of agency and political intuitions. During my encounters in Shatila, the Palestinian endurance, resistance and stamina was so evident in their everyday gestures between normalcy and temporariness, between permanency and waiting. Although refugees may have been neglected by formal politics and institutions, although their rights may have been dismissed, until a just solution is found they will never forget.

Conclusions

Facing this reality and acting towards a democratic involvement of their voices and desires would be the first step towards the recognition of their predicament and exclusion. Refugees have to participate in the decisions taken over their lives if a true peace is to be found. Excluding them from the talks would only further marginalise them and their voices.

To conclude, I hope that in this thesis I have also shown how binary distinctions such as exception vs. rule, space of exception vs. space of law, sovereign power vs. bare life, refugee vs. citizens, Palestinian vs. Lebanese (the latter also critically addressed in Chapter 2 and the social science use of the 'sample') are frameworks of analysis that would not grasp the complexity of power relations and life itself. In other words as these binary distinctions are produced within biopolitics – which itself places life at the centre of power concerns – if we take life as both *object* of our future investigations and *subject* of agency, distinctions and lines cutting through bodies disappear. Although the sovereign will never stop to draw lines to separate the life worth living from the one deserving abandonment, life itself is the best form of resistance. The sovereign may have cast out certain lives from the normal juridical order. Yet, he may have forgotten or dismissed that life after the decision does go on.

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